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LITTLE THEATER CLASSICS

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VOLUME TWO

SCENE FROM *ABRAHAM AND ISAAC* AS PRODUCED BY SAM HUME IN HIS "PERMANENT SETTING" AT THE ARTS AND CRAFTS THEATER, DETROIT, IN JANUARY, 1917

The appearance of the Angel

Frontispiece

LITTLE THEATER CLASSICS

VOLUME TWO

ADAPTED AND EDITED BY

SAMUEL A. ELIOT, JR.

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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TO MY

CO-LABORERS

SAM HUME

AND

PHILIP MOELLER

PREFACE

WITH the return of peace and resumption of normal activities, the Little Theater Movement visibly revives and flourishes. It is less esoteric, more communal than it used to be. The Community Houses which will probably be erected everywhere in fitting memorial for those who died for democracy will normally include a stage: the theater has attained that degree of recognition in America. The art of the theater, though it still cannot be fostered and enjoyed on a profitable basis save when by a stroke of luck a play like Ervine's *John Ferguson* produced by the New York Theater Guild in May, 1919, meets unexpected, widespread public favor, yet finds ever-increasing interest and support. Not even in War's darkest days was its growth wholly checked; the Detroit Arts and Crafts Theater, the Provincetown Players in New York and Copeau's Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, now lost to us once more in Paris, continued to pioneer and unfold new possibilities of drama and stagecraft. A yet more fervent discipleship among all who care for Art itself may be expected now, and consequently a more rapid, venturesome, and financially sustained progress should mark the next few years than signalized the movement's infancy in 1911–1918.

Three of the plays in this second volume of our series were produced before the eclipse of 1918, — two of them in a good many Little Theaters. The

fourth, which came near to production at the former Toy Theater in Boston in the season of 1913–1914 and is likely to attract individual actors of ambition everywhere, demands for its adequate presentation a more mature, complete Art-theater than, as yet, existed in America: *The Loathed Lover* undeniably needs some acting of the highest quality and an audience not squeamish but trained in appreciation of the best. The first need is now, it seems, in sight of fulfilment through such organizations as the New York Theater Guild and such producers as Maurice Browne. The second is complicated by the well-known fact that women, not men, are the arbiters of the legitimate drama, especially of the artistic drama, here to-day: thence the prevalence of sweet, spineless, unmomentous plays among so many artistic amateur groups. *The Loathed Lover* is stressfully masculine in spirit and appeal. The natural man feels pleasure when an unattractive specimen of his sex wins an ideal woman on the stage; he feels he might have had a chance with her himself. The normal woman, on the other hand, is displeased, even repelled. And while the sensationalism of the play may attract experimenters in view of the success of Benelli's *The Jest*, which is quite of the same order, the Little Theater public outside sophisticated New York City still needs some preparation for such strong fare. This the clubs and study-groups and colleges may give. It is a fact that all classic drama, except in certain not very brilliant epochs like the Precious period in the seventeenth century and the Sentimental in the eighteenth, was developed and written with exceedingly little regard for feminine feelings. As

history, merely, that fact must be admitted into all criticism of the great plays of the past. Girls and women in drama classes are too prone to prefer the pathetic and sentimental old plays — like Heywood's *Woman Killed with Kindness* and Otway's *Venice Preserved* — to the truly powerful and tragic. *The Loathed Lover*, though it does of course cry out for a Shakespeare to touch each climax to sublimity, is an extraordinarily virile, well-wrought, and stageworthy drama. Once allowed for, as an ineradicable trait of its time, its masculine twist should not obviate even feminist appreciation. By readers it has long been admired even amid the choking dross of *The Changeling*, and in its present stage form it should assuredly win further praise from armchair critics previously unacquainted with the genuine theatric power and dramatic truth in many old plays of its post-Shakespearean time and style. But it is preëminently an acting play, and only in worthy stage revival can it show forth its veritable color and desert. Ungrateful though it may be to female instinct, the cultivated mind of woman as of man may fairly appreciate its art.

Sganarelle too is plainly matter for men, but with redeeming features. It is a farce: that relieves it of much odium. The women in it are on the whole more *sympathetic* than the men. And it bears a famous name: Molière may be expected to lure the interest (especially after Copeau's great re-creations of his lighter plays) of all but "low-brows," and the "low-brows" too, once entrapped, will enjoy its primitive drollery. With its burlesque situations, rollicking rhymes, and showy costumes, and an eight weeks'

run in New York behind it, it is just the kind of play that amateur clubs most like.

Our other, earlier French farce, *Patelin*,[1] through the sheer force of its comic situations, has often proved delightful in amateurish hands, though it would of course profit greatly from trained, resourceful acting. The present version, preserving more closely than either of its predecessors the style and flavor of the original and arranged for easy and novel staging, should find a ready public.

Abraham and Isaac also is widely known, and the new version here printed was given the test of production by the editor at Christmas, 1918, as the city's Christmas celebration in the municipal theater at Northampton, Massachusetts. Its success bore out all his expectations and warranted the strongest recommendation to all art-theater groups who have not yet seen it of this latest form of an unusually well-tried Miracle-play. The Angel's wings and Abraham's costume and sword were rented from the Detroit Arts and Crafts Theater; otherwise the accouterments were local and very simple. Based on Mr. Hume's production at St. Paul, hereinafter described, the performance proved fuller, richer, more touching, less austere and grandly moving. With a more childish Isaac and the greater intimacy of the Brome play elements in the text, the purely pathetic effect of the presentation was astonishing.

As with the five plays of the first volume, dating B.C. 426, A.D. 1534, 1589, 1608?, and 1775, the four of this book illustrate widely different and typical

[1] To be pronounced — why not? — Pate-lin, not Pa-te-lin as in French.

epochs of the drama's history and date from 1465 and 1660 in France, 1475 (perhaps) and 1622 in England. They have, then, some educational value; but they are meant not to be studied but to be produced and seen. Much more, and more inspiring, knowledge is gained from practical experience with drama than through academic processes. With high hopes, then, for the quick and hearty revival of the Little Theater idea, the fertile return and vigorous accomplishment of the many artists of the theater who donned khaki, and the successful production on many stages of these Little Theater Classics, Volume Two is herewith pushed before the curtain.

SAMUEL A. ELIOT, JR.

July, 1919.

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PATELIN

Adapted from the Farce of
Maître Pierre Pathelin

By Guillaume Alécis

1465

INTRODUCTION

MEDIEVAL FARCE was the "stuffing" of medieval drama. Amid the solemnities of Scriptural Mysteries, the martyrdoms and Miracles of the saints, the homiletic Moral-plays, men craved a chance to laugh and monks or mountebanks failed not to give it to them. The seller of unguents to the three Maries on their way to anoint the dead Christ was invented, at the very beginning of the religious drama's evolution, as a personage of the spectators' own time, evoking laughter by his familiarity in looks, actions, and jokes. Passages of realistic comedy clowned by nameless types from the everyday world that was so sordid and brutal, superstitious and cunning, interspersed the stately march of nearly every long church play — as the Gothic architects and craftsmen inserted low-browed gargoyles at every corner of their sublime cathedrals. And as early as the mid-thirteenth century — in France, at least — short, shapeless "farces" existed quite detached from any greater play.

After the time of Jeanne d'Arc when peace returned to France and business commenced, the burgess ousting the soldier, the farce blossomed, and flourished until the Renaissance. From that hundred years some one hundred and fifty French farces have happened to survive in primitive print or rarer manuscript. One and all they deal with squalid realities, meanness

and trickery, gross stupidity or carnal wit. Beauty, grandeur, poetry, morality, even fresh imagination or thoughtful insight, are lacking. Gone were romance and chivalry and naïve universal faith. Instead, the budding bourgeois world, professional or mercantile, was sketched in crass but truthful caricature and laughed immodestly to see itself so vile. Its king was Louis XI, unchristianly devout. Its bard was François Villon, hymning its reprobance in deathless verse. And in *Maître Pierre Pathelin* it found and recognized its most acute reflection.

The author of this, the crown and archetype of medieval farce, has lately been identified with "the good monk" Guillaume Alécis. Like all its contemporaries, it had long been anonymous. Its date is probably 1464–1465, — certainly not later than 1469, when it was mentioned in a royal pardon. It embodies the very essence of its era: the "practical" selfishness, the grinning depravity of its fellow farces is here expressed with an individual art and theatric illusion that recreate. It is thrice as long as the normal fifteenth-century farce, and every way better. In others one sometimes finds, says Richard T. Holbrook, "a neatly constructed plot and ingenious situations . . . but in general they are flimsily constructed and seem more like dramatized anecdotes than like true drama: natural motives are too often absent." *Pathelin* was immensely successful, had two sequels, impressed scholars and writers like Rabelais, was translated into Latin, adapted into German and Italian, re-told in an English jest-book, and deeply influenced French theatric tradition. Though Molière and his predecessors consciously pursued classic ideals

and imitated Roman, Italian, and Spanish comedy, this wholly indigenous Gothic play unconsciously affected them profoundly. It is indeed intensely French and exquisitely characteristic of its type and time.

In 1700 *Pathelin* was adapted to the half-classic, half-ballet dramatic mode of that period by an Abbé Brueys, and in this form it kept the stage till 1857. In 1872 the original farce was revived in modernized language and split into three acts. Thus it reappears every now and then in the repertory of the Comédie Française, and the modern text has been published illustrated with sixteen etchings by Boutet de Monvel which should if possible be studied well before any production is attempted.[1]

The Brueys *Patelin* was turned into an English "curtain-raiser," *The Village Lawyer*, in 1787, which held the stage on both sides of the Atlantic for twenty years and more. It was also translated by S. F. G. Whitaker in 1905 under the title *L'Avocat Patelin*. In the same year appeared Doctor Holbrook's first translation of the farce as originally printed, at Lyons, about 1486, — a translation since revised and re-issued (1914) by Walter H. Baker and Company.[2] This was produced in the 47 Workshop at Harvard in 1913, the Little Theater at Philadelphia in 1914, and the Artists' Guild Theater, St. Louis, in 1917–1918, — and very likely elsewhere. It is in colloquial prose, scarcely succinct enough for effective performance.

[1] *La Farce de Maître Pathelin*, published in three forms, at two, ten, and forty francs respectively, by the Libraire Ch. Delagrave, 15 Rue Soufflot, Paris.

[2] Six fifteenth-century woodcuts illustrating *Pathelin* are reproduced in this edition, and repay study by prospective actors, costumers, and producers.

Another version, by "Maurice Relonde," was submitted to the Washington Square Players in New York and by them very successfully produced in 1916. The present editor had every opportunity to study and memorize this presentation. It was afterwards given at the Indianapolis Little Theater and probably elsewhere, and was published in the May, 1917, "Summer" number of *Poet Lore*. It too is in prose, and is very free both in leaving out a great deal of its original entirely and in inventing new ideas, characterizing touches, or laughable speeches, as though the writer had merely read *Pathelin* scene by scene, and then made a condensed sketch, quite his own, on the same lines. The original farce, in common with all its contemporaries, was written in octosyllabic couplets. The tripping meter and pat rhyme are distinctly a part of its charm, and together with its superabundance of oaths, egregious and otherwise, contribute indispensably to its illusiveness. Terse the French is not: each humorous development is iterated and spun out in a way to convince the modern that *playgoers'* wits, at any rate, are sharper now than in 1465. The very oaths often so retard the action that many have been dropped from the translation that follows. This translation does not pretend to be literal — it is considerably freer than Doctor Holbrook's, though not so flightily independent as Mr. "Relonde's"— but it does for the first time give *Patelin* a garb of English verse, no more poetical than the French but metrical (four beats to the line) and rhymed, though not monotonously in couplets. A few irregular short lines give an effect not unlike the archaic jolts in fifteenth-century English plays; the Shepherd's lout-

ishness finds readiest expression in prose; Patelin's delirious lingoes naturally upset for a while the orderly rhythm; but in general the form is truer to the French than that of previous versions has been. The dialogue is of course condensed — from one thousand six hundred lines to about seven hundred — but (at least in intention) it includes every comic point, besides a good many of Mr. "Relonde's" coining that memorably "got across" at the old Bandbox Theater, and a few new ones like the "Old Nick" references near the end. In diction it is a jumble — an occasional "thou" or archaic term jostling yesterday's slang, according to the humor of the speech. In one important particular it departs from all predecessors: the Shepherd is introduced very early in the play, and the two big scenes — Patelin's mock delirium, and the trial — are thereby juxtaposed at the end. The fifteenth-century author cleared up his cloth-stealing episode before commencing his Shepherd story at all. His audience probably was not able to carry two threads in mind at the same time. But for us this splits the plot crudely in the middle, and if it is to be given as a one-act play, unity of effect is very desirable. So Patelin's designs on Joceaulme and Joceaulme's designs on the Shepherd are briefly indicated at the beginning; Patelin — in transit, so to speak — instructs Lambkin how to bleat his way out of the noose, and then settles to cheating the Draper; and the plot's interest thence unsaggingly mounts from scene to scene till the very end.

Like most old plays, this farce leaves much to the player to make telling; yet at the same time it is all but actor-proof. Therefore it is exceptionally apt

material for amateurs and for artistic producers. In stylization it may run the gamut from rigid convention, fifteenth-century stiffness, archaic naïveté, to modern glamour, stunning color and rattling "laughs." It may use a large crowd or a minimum number of court attendants at the trial. Extravagant or minute, archaeological or post-impressionistic, for fun or intent art, whatever treatment it undergoes should be thorough, consistent, — and comic. To elicit laughter it was made; to propagate laughter not quite thoughtless it is proffered here to theater-lovers.

STAGING

THE scene of the farce shifts between Patelin's room and the market place of his native city. Originally the two were no doubt shown side by side on the platform stage, and the players ran visibly from one location to the other. The speeches almost always overlap in rhyme, proving that there was never a pause in the action. In the middle of the sick-room scene, the Draper could be observed scuttling to his shop, searching for the cloth, realizing the cheat, and dashing back to Patelin's. Afterwards the Shepherd encountered him in the street, the neutral middle foreground, and then knocked at Patelin's door and interviewed him safely inside his house; and during the latter part of this scene the Court was preparing in the market place, so that Patelin simply adjusted his robes and stepped out with a greeting to the Judge. Something of this double-stage arrangement must be retained, either side by side or fore and rear, if the curtain is to be kept from interrupting the action to permit scene changes. The fore and rear arrangement was that designed by Lee Simonson for the Washington Square Players. Joceaulme's shop was shown down left, Patelin's house door down right, and behind these two set pieces hung curtains flatly painted to suggest further medieval façades. Behind these, on a platform, was set Patelin's curtained four-poster and Guillemette's table and stool, starkly projected

by a plain white wall behind them. After the sick-room scene these were removed, and the reopening of the curtains for the trial revealed a back-drop of impressionistic yellow castle towering into rich blue sky, against which, on the platform, the Judge's attendants set his high-backed chair. This was a pictorially satisfying but heavy and elaborate staging, and one impossible for our version where the trial immediately succeeds the false delirium.

A setting on a *revolving stage* would be ideal, — the miniature city wheeling around and about as its inhabitants passed from house to shop or court. But since this is out of the question for most American theaters, a scheme employed by the First Studio of the Moscow Art Theater to stage *Twelfth Night* without intervals may be adapted to *Patelin:* namely, to split the stage in halves by a transverse curtain that can swing to either side, alternately quite concealing one and disclosing the other to the entire auditorium. The horizontal arm from which this curtain hangs is hinged to a solid post up center, and is supported at its tip by a little wheel running on a curved track of wood or metal. A rather deep neutral proscenium or intensifying picture frame will be required, and on the top of this the track can rest. A rope from the arm's end to either side, hanging down behind the proscenium flats, is sufficient then to pull the arm and curtain to the up-stage side of either flat, right or left. In each flat there is a door, — that on the right admitting to Patelin's room when it is shown at stage left, and then opening on-stage, or else leading into the Draper's house, so opening off-stage, when the scene shows the market place at the right; and that on the

left, which opens always off-stage, admitting to the market place or else leading to other rooms in Patelin's home. The left-hand side of the center curtain, shown when the curtain is swung to the right, is painted to seem the bare wall of a poverty-stricken chamber. At approximately a right angle to it is set a similar-looking wall with a curtained recess containing Patelin's bed and a nook down-stage where stand a plain table and stool and a broom of twigs.

Now when the curtain swings across, conceals these things, and shows its right side in their stead, we see painted thereon a massive exterior wall against which the Judge's high chair will later stand. Up-stage on the right-hand side of the center post is a profile prospect of the steep-roofed city against a changeful sky, — at first a cloudy dawn and morning, during the trial a ruddier afternoon (a change from white and blue lamps to white and amber), brightening to sunset (amber floodlight) upon the final tableau. Before this stands a box on a post with a slot to receive God's-pennies. Further down, leaving a fairly wide entrance-way between, is Joceaulme's shop connecting with the frame and door down right. Before its open front stands a square stool for his customers' use. Within, his rolls of cloth lie piled on shelves.

When the play begins the scene is Patelin's room. He himself sits hunched on the bed, a huge leather-bound law-book in his lap. Guillemette, his wife, sits on the stool sewing. Her workbox and rags are on the table. Patelin's nightgown and nightcap lie at the foot of the bed ready for later use. The light, best furnished by a flood from a hole above the door down right, is chill but fairly bright.

CHARACTERS

PETER PATELIN, LAWYER, fox-faced, lantern-jawed, and lean, wearing a threadbare lawyer's gown, very old shoes, and a shabby lawyer's hat with much cloth falling from its top around his neck, throat, and shoulders. His belt supports a wallet on one side and writing materials on the other. Beneath the gown he wears dark undergarments, very ragged, which are seen when he scrambles into his night-clothes.

GUILLEMETTE, HIS WIFE, much like him, in a patched dress and frayed petticoat and a plain coif turned back in front, lying free on the shoulders, and dropping a long ribbon from its crown to the floor, gathered in at the belt.

GUILLAUME JOCEAULME, DRAPER, with a donkey-like expression. His nose is large and long, probably artificial. His ears are big and stand out through his fringe of hair. His chin is broad and cleft, his eyes little and cunning, his face pocked, and his voice strong and unpleasant. He wears a long, full gown with a purse at the belt, and a hat with less cloth than Patelin's hanging down the left side of his face, under his chin, and over his right shoulder.

TIBALD LAMBKIN, SHEPHERD, expressionless as a sheep save when a glimmering of guile lightens his visage. He is young, of small stature, and but half clothed in a sheepskin and leggings that leave most of his

legs bare. He wears a fleecy cap, has a pouch at his belt with a big copper sou in it, and carries a staff that is flattened and slightly curved at the larger end — *not* a conventional crook. His habitual tone is a guttural or nasal drawl, but his "baa" must be perfectly mimicked from a sheep, yet varied and expressive too.

THE JUDGE, fleshy and pompous, in a full-flowing, gorgeous robe and hat. He has a roving eye, a bullying voice, an impatient hand.

A BOY and GIRL, of twelve years or so, who play about among the crowd and "point" the comic developments.

OTHER TOWNSFOLK, as picturesque as possible, — nuns, flower girls, fishwives, a courtesan, very gay, who flirts with the Judge, — and soldiers, archers, bailiffs and servitors attending the court, and the Judge's comic caricature of a Clerk. All the men, at least the principals, wear their hair long, — in a fringe cut below the ears.

PATELIN

Master Peter begins.

PATELIN

By holy Mary, Guillemette,
Neither my trade nor tricks can get!
(*Picking at his gown*)
I'm threadbare! — Yet we've seen a day
When I had clients, and they'd pay!

GUILLEMETTE (*wearily sewing*)

Ay, by our Lady, don't I mind
When every one besought your kind
Attorneyship to win his case!
(*Half aside, bitterly*)
Now, every one eludes your grace!

PATELIN (*swinging his feet off the bed, turning sharply to face the audience*)

I needn't brag — here's no gainsayer.
In the whole circuit, save our Mayor,
No lawyer pleads so well as me.

GUILLEMETTE (*stopping, looking at him*)

But what's the good? You starve, you see!
Your robe's all rents, and all the oaths
You take — won't make us any clothes!

PATELIN

Pish, tush! When *my* wits once get started,
(*finger to forehead*)
Drapers and dry goods soon are parted!

GUILLEMETTE

Not a soul trusts you. There's no beating
You, they all know, when it comes to cheating!

PATELIN (*severely*)

To practising my profession!
(*He claps shut the book in his lap*) Law!

GUILLEMETTE (*scornfully*)

Oh, you've a lawyer's jaw, and claw,
But neither sense nor schooling —
(*he turns upon her threateningly and she finishes high and quick*) nor a gown!
(*That abashes him*)
You're only "the slyest sharper in town!"

PATELIN

They say the same of barristers
(*sarcastically*)
In silk and velvet.
(*He pauses on the words, struck. We see an idea dawn and grow*) An idea stirs.
(*He gets up*)
I'm going to market!

GUILLEMETTE (*astonished, dropping her mending*)

Market, ass?

PATELIN

Yes, "going to market, my pretty lass!"
Will you be sorry if I purchase
A yard or two of stuffs — and birches?

GUILLEMETTE (*resenting the implications of wife-beating: loudly*)

You haven't a red sou! What can *you* buy?

PATELIN (*slyly*)

That's telling, my beauty, — but if I
Don't straight bring home enough cloth for us both,

(*she rises*)
Then I *am* a fibber, I'll take oath!
What color will become you best?
GUILLEMETTE (*incredulously curt*)
Beggars must not be choosers.
PATELIN (*with an ejaculation of impatience*)
Peste!
(*Measuring her, his hands a yard or more apart*)
Two and a half's enough for you;
For me, three — better four . . . and do
I need new underclothes?
GUILLEMETTE (*heartily*)
You do!
PATELIN (*counting on his fingers*)
Well, then . . .
GUILLEMETTE (*bursting out*)
What merchant will trust *you?*
PATELIN (*cheerily*)
Who but our long-nosed donkey neighbor
Master Guillaume Joceaulme, the draper?
GUILLEMETTE
The wariest skinflint — !
PATELIN
The easier prey!
He'll give us the cloth, and get his pay
On Doomsday — no sooner!
GUILLEMETTE (*sarcastic*)
To him, my dear — or some one else
May now be wearing your silks and felts!
(*As Patelin tiptoes to the door down right*)
And if any one stands treat —
PATELIN (*whirling in the door, forefinger raised*)
Watch everything!

[*With a flourish that indicates the utter bareness of the room to be watched, he disappears.*

GUILLEMETTE (*breathless*)

Well!

[*Then she too looks around the room, and sighs: then looks after her husband with brightening face, then at the audience questioningly — hopefully — confidently; and as the transverse curtain swings toward her from the right, she grabs up the clothes she was mending and darts off through the door down left.*

A crowd of early marketers come on from up right: — peddlers and purchasers, jabbering unintelligible French; a boy and girl dashing about, filching and upsetting things; a cross-bowman acting as policeman, ineffectually.

Joceaulme the draper pokes his unready head out of the door down right, startled to see the world abroad so soon. He pulls it promptly in again, pops on his hat, and appears in his open shop-front, unrolling some of his bales on the counter and trying to attract attention to them. The boy makes a long nose at him and says "hee-haw," and the girl's hands point up from her head and wobble like asses' ears. He shoos them off with an unintelligible imprecation.

Two nuns in wide-flaring white headdresses glide down from up right and look at Joceaulme's goods. The boy and girl mimic them. A gaudy courtesan follows, impudently elbowing the nuns away. Joceaulme is angry at the interruption: he and the courtesan have a tiff and she sails off scornfully. The children jeer Joceaulme and follow her, the girl imitating her glide, the boy admiring.

The Shepherd, Tibald Lambkin, slips in, up right,

and along the wall represented by the curtain across the left half of the stage, keeping the crowd between himself and Joceaulme's shop, toward which nevertheless he is evidently bound. Joceaulme meanwhile leans his elbow on the counter and growls to himself.

JOCEAULME

A lying world! My customers cheat.
My shepherds kill my sheep and eat.
Prince of unfortunates am I!
(*Standing up again crossly, he spies the Shepherd across the stage*)
Yonder one of my rogues I spy
Whom I have always given the best!
He shall smart now for his sorry jest!

[*The crowd is rapidly drifting out, up right, and the Shepherd perforce approaches the shop.*

LAMBKIN (*in an ingratiating rustic drawl*)

God give you good day, sweet master, and good even.

JOCEAULME (*fixing him, with drawn lip and narrowed eye*)

Ha, is it thou, vile sot?
A good varlet — but good for what?

[*He suddenly makes the sign of hanging.*

LAMBKIN (*deprecating the sign, attempting innocence*)

Beg you, be not en-angered . . . Don't know who it was in striped hosen, right disorderly, sweet Sir, who held a whip with no lash who said to me . . . but I can't recall truly very well at all what it might be . . . but it was about you, kind Sir, and some summons — and, holy Mary! — he muddled me with his ewes and laws and hullabaloos!

JOCEAULME (*grimly*)

If I don't have you hauled at once

Before the Judge — *you* may call *me* dunce!
You never butchered beast of mine
But you'll remember it, neck in twine!
[*Again he makes the gesture of hanging.*

LAMBKIN (*loudly*)

I never! They died of sickness, sweet Sir!

JOCEAULME

As you shall die by hanging, you cur!

LAMBKIN (*with a gesture*)

Hang by the neck? (*As though just realizing it*) It might be the end of me! (*He falls on his knees by the stool, with clasped hands upstretched*) For the Lord's sake, settle it with me out of court, (*shrieking*) for I cannot plead to a Judge!

[*These histrionics attract the children; they stand still and watch, center.*

JOCEAULME

Begone until this afternoon!
Mind the hour well, you loon!
Your affairs are near an end.
You'll find no lawyer to defend
Your stealing my sheep!
(*Lambkin writhes and begins to bawl*)
Begone, I say! I'll settle nought
Save as the Judge directs! You're caught!
Bleat and blubber and weep!

[*He goes out of sight, down right. The boy and girl mimic the sheep-like crying of the Shepherd. He stops, turns on them, gets up and threatens them with his staff; then leans across the counter after Joceaulme.*

LAMBKIN (*sarcastically courteous*)

Adieu, good Sir! God give you joy!

(*As he turns away from the shop, Patelin enters, down left, and overhears his next speech, a heartfelt prayer, without noticing any relation between him and Joceaulme*)

Oh, for some sharp one to defend me!

(*He perceives Patelin, and that he is a lawyer: and with an unspoken self-congratulatory "Hullo!" bows low to him, doffing his cap*)

God be with you! God bless you!

PATELIN (*receptively*)

Well, my boy?

(*Mimicking him*) God keep you! — What would you? Anything pertaining to the law (*tapping his book*)?

LAMBKIN

They've summoned me, good master; and I know nothing. (*Wheedling*) You will come if you like and defend me — and I will pay you well, for all my bad clothes.

("*Pay you*" *interests Patelin, but* "*bad clothes*" *embarrasses him and he assumes a sharply superior, professional tone*)

PATELIN

So! And which art thou, plaintiff or
Defendant?

LAMBKIN

I've been summoned for
Some sheep my master set me keeping —
Truly, he stinted me miserly—
And I —

[*The boy and girl are close behind, listening. Patelin motions them away and draws Lambkin down left.*

PATELIN

Come hither — some one's peeping.
We might be overheard, you see.
(*But the children give them up and run off up right*)
Well?

LAMBKIN

Must I tell you everythin'?

PATELIN (*tapping his book*)

Client from counsel nought shall hide!

LAMBKIN (*swallowing*)

Well — I whacked them till they died;
And ate the meat, and wore the skin;
And told *him* 'twas the *scab* they had.
"Cut out the scabby ones," he said.
I did, and cut them *up* (*with a leer*), and fed;
But one too many made him mad:
He had me spied on: here I am.

PATELIN

And what'll you pay if I get you away?

LAMBKIN

Will five — four crowns be enough?
(*Patelin starts off: he snatches his gown*) Stay!

PATELIN (*severely*)

What is your name, if you're not a sham?

LAMBKIN

Tibald Lambkin.

PATELIN (*jocular*)

And many a lamb
I warrant has gone to support that name!
(*Lambkin grins and nods*)
Has your master witnesses to his claim?

LAMBKIN

Not one —

PATELIN

That's good!

LAMBKIN

— But more 'n a dozen!

PATELIN

That's bad; but have you the wit to cozen
And gull and stick to a steady game?
(*Lambkin nods eagerly*)
And have you the six gold crowns you mentioned?
(*Lambkin nods again*)
Well, I'll maintain you're a well-intentioned
Booby — Ah! An idea! One came!
(*As if this were the most extraordinary coincidence, he steps down to the audience and holds up two fingers, then one*)
Two ideas in *one* day! . . . You're free!
But the money — I get a much larger fee
Than — did you say seven? (*Lambkin, not yet knowing the idea, nods*) It must be eight!
Then I can cloak you even from Fate!

LAMBKIN

I'm but a poor shepherd — but one sou here.
(*He fishes it out and gives it to Patelin, who drops it into his wallet*)
Take it in earnest —

PATELIN

Ah, but I fear —

LAMBKIN (*hurriedly*)

I have gold laid by! You can make your rate!
But I can't pay if I hang.
[*With a sorry laugh.*

PATELIN

Now, wait.

You must never have seen me or heard of me.

LAMBKIN (*protesting*)

Oh, no, not that!

PATELIN

And you mustn't utter
One word of sense — not even mutter;
No, mutton is all you can think or see,
So a *maaa*-ing mutton you must be!
Say nothing but *maa*, though they rail and fume!
If you talk, you'll confess, and confession is doom!
Let them split with roaring: I'll say "Aha,
Poor idiot lamb!" and you'll say *maaa!*

LAMBKIN (*broadly*)

Oh, I can do that!

PATELIN

Even if I
Put questions to you myself — be sly!
(*Lambkin nods cunningly;* he *knows!*)
Nothing but *maaaa!*

LAMBKIN (*shaking his head*)

Maaaaa! It's my mother tongue.

PATELIN

So, you're safe. And don't forget
Those nine gold crowns!

LAMBKIN (*wisely*)

Oh, I'll pay if I'm let!

PATELIN

Till afternoon then at the court!
(*Lambkin makes all speed off, up right*)
Both specie I'll have from him, and sport!
And now (*as he crosses to the shop*) — not there?
Ah, yes, he is!

(*He spies Joceaulme in the down-stage part of the shop, hardly if at all visible from the audience*)
My dear sweet Sir, God send you bliss!

JOCEAULME (*shortly, expecting no trade, but poking his head out*)
And give you joy!

PATELIN (*admiringly*)
Busy with your goods!
(*Feelingly*)
I've yearned to see you, dear Guillaume!
How fares your health, and all at home?

JOCEAULME (*snaps*)
Good, by God!

PATELIN (*extending his hand*)
There! Our neighborhoods
Unite us. (*Joceaulme gives him his hand; Patelin holds it tight and scans him*) Looking fine!

JOCEAULME (*pleased*)
And you?

PATELIN (*rather too heartily: for he knows he is not naturally the "good mixer"*)
By my name Saint, th' Apostle Peter,
Well, and all yours! You ne'er looked sweeter!
You're happy?

JOCEAULME (*withdrawing his hand*)
Oh, ay. But it's true
Merchants aren't always given their due.

PATELIN
Business prospering?

JOCEAULME (*till this moment, the day has brought him nothing pleasant*)
Afore Heaven, good master, I hardly know!
I manage to get along, — so-so.

[*And he clucks as though jogging behind a tardy horse.*

PATELIN (*beaming*)

Ah, *he* was a knowing wight —
Your father, I mean; God speed his flight!
I can scarce believe that you're not he!
What a merchant *he* was! quick as a flea!
And *you*'re the very picture of *him.*
(*He puts his book down on a partly opened roll of cloth, lifts his hat, and crosses himself*)
If God be ever moved to forgive,
May he grant your father that *his* soul live!

JOCEAULME (*brusquely doing the same*)

Amen, and to us may he not be grim!

PATELIN (*returning to his theme and leaning familiarly on the counter*)

Ah, many a time he'd dilate to me
On the bad days coming — that we now see.
And you, they say, are more and more
Like him — a man picked out of a score!

JOCEAULME (*emerging from his shell*)

Sit down, fair sir! It's time, indeed!
These are my manners!

PATELIN (*suavely*)

There's no need.
Your father —

JOCEAULME (*takes him by the shoulders and pushes him down on to the stool*)

Truly, you must!

PATELIN (*yielding gracefully*)

With pleasure.
Your father (*looking up at him*) — but bless my soul, you measure

His length precisely — your nose, I mean.
Those ears, that dimpled chin, your keen
Little eyes, the very pocks and all!
If you'd both been spat against a wall
One after t'other the selfsame way,
You'd look thus like, in the same array!
(*He begins, as though absent-mindedly, to finger the cloth against which he leans*)
Well, sir, — the good Laurentia
Your step-aunt — is she dead yet?

JOCEAULME (*bewildered*)

Na—

PATELIN

Comely, erect and gracious — you
Resemble her in carriage too:
Two drops of milk are not more like!
(*Then, as though his fingers had but just carried their message to his brain*)
This is a well-made piece! I like
The feel of smooth, soft cloth like this.

JOCEAULME

I had that woven from the fleece
Of my own flocks!

PATELIN

What management!
Your father over again! — I spent
Many a good crown here, one time.
He trusted me, and *his* wool was prime!

JOCEAULME

It costs much trouble and worry to keep
Honest shepherds to guard one's sheep.

PATELIN (*too intent on his object to catch the reference*)

Ah, always busy you are, like him.

Kind and trusting, I warrant, too!
(*He takes his book off the cloth and spreads both hands over it*)
This roll is dyed a marvelous hue!
(*As Joceaulme unrolls it further*)
It goes to my heart! My eyes are dim!

JOCEAULME
Dyeing and dyers cost me dear —
But shying buyers must be lured near!
[*He smiles expectantly at Patelin.*

PATELIN
Truly, I had no thought at all
Of getting cloth when I came to call.
But I have fourscore crowns laid by
For profitable use — (*looking up with a wink and a smile*) No cheating!
Ah —
Your father knew how to spy and pry
When he lent on credit! — But time is fleeting!
[*He half rises to go.*

JOCEAULME (*quickly*)
Would your borrowers be content with less?

PATELIN (*thoughtfully*)
That's as I please.

JOCEAULME (*insinuatingly*)
You can never guess
For sure if a man is honest or not.

PATELIN
Said like your sire!

JOCEAULME (*hungrily*)
Gold crowns!

PATELIN (*nonchalantly; then with enthusiasm for the cloth*) Gold. — What

Is this cloth? — for I seem to see
It all made up in a coat for me
And a dress for my wife too! — But I shouldn't —

JOCEAULME (*a suggestive hand on his arm*)

Oh, Master Patelin, think! Why wouldn't
A crier bleat through here some fine day
The name of a new Judge, Master Pa—
(*Patelin stops him with a deprecatory gesture. He snatches up the end of the roll of cloth and drapes it over Patelin's shoulder*)
And then, your new gown!

PATELIN

Ah, kind friend, — you're gay!
(*Laughing reminiscently*)
Your little joke! So your father would jest
Till, my purse undressed and my person new-dressed,
I left here changed — but aye for the best!

JOCEAULME (*eagerly*)

Then try it again! This is all yours, flat,
Though you hadn't a copper!

PATELIN (*gazing at it rather absent-mindedly*)

Oh, I know that!

JOCEAULME (*taken aback*)

What . . .?

PATELIN (*hastily*)

I'll take it.

JOCEAULME (*happily*)

How much?

PATELIN (*warily*)

The first yard
Will cost? —

JOCEAULME (*confidently*)

Twenty-four sous.

PATELIN (*decisively*)

God guard!

JOCEAULME (*swiftly explanatory*)

Cloth costs like holy oil this year!
I can't afford to lose!

PATELIN (*unmoved*)

Too dear!

JOCEAULME (*feverishly*)

My shepherds are always robbing me!

PATELIN (*determinedly*)

Twenty sous!

JOCEAULME

Well — say twenty-three!
(*Patelin protests*)
Wait till Saturday and see!
That's what I have to pay myself,
And then it stays months on the shelf!

PATELIN (*after a moment, graciously*)

Oh, well, no further haggling! Measure.

JOCEAULME

How much?

PATELIN

That's easy. (*Counting on his fingers again*) Three for me,
Two and a half for her — let's see . . .
She's tall — make it six yards.

JOCEAULME

With pleasure!
(*He gives the end of the cloth to Patelin to hold, and pulls out his yardstick from behind the counter*)
Take hold there. No scrimping! (*Measuring*) One, (*and each time he lifts the yardstick, Patelin cheats by pulling the cloth a little towards himself*)

Two, three, four, five, six. Done?

PATELIN (*admiringly*)

Belly of Peter, reckoned close!

JOCEAULME (*innocently*)

Shall I try it backwards?

PATELIN

Oh, dear, no!

(*With cheerful disdain*)

There's always a little gain or loss.

What does it all amount to, so?

JOCEAULME (*in the throes of mental arithmetic*)

Six yards at twenty-three sous per yard —

That's just seven francs!

PATELIN (*as though relieved*)

That's not hard!

(*He peeks into his wallet*)

But hold! I have but little by me.

(*He takes out the Shepherd's sou and holds it up for Joceaulme to see*)

God's penny here, to clinch things!

(*Piously doffing his hat, he strides to the box on the post and drops the sou in. Joceaulme meanwhile cuts the six-yard piece off the roll, not without a little cheating on his own account. Patelin, returning, lays hold of the piece beguilingly*) Try me!

(*Joceaulme is astounded at the suggestion*)

Your father trusted me of old.

JOCEAULME (*almost gasping*)

No, no!

[*And he grabs the end of the cloth that Patelin is drawing off.*

PATELIN (*temptingly*)

Not copper, nor silver, but *gold*

Lies at my house for you, ready told!

JOCEAULME (*rudely*)

That's off my road!

PATELIN (*playfully*)

Gospel! You said it!
You're *never* ready to come around
And take a drink; but this time you're bound!

JOCEAULME (*with a grin*)

Drink? I'm always drinking! — But *credit!*
On a first sale like this?

PATELIN (*with an injured air*)

Good sir,
Did I *ask* you for *credit*? beg to defer
Payment one day, one hour? deter
Your coming *at once* for your fair gold coin?
I pray you, follow me straight — and join
My wife and me on a fat roast goose!
(*Joceaulme's grip on the cloth relaxes; he visibly hesitates*)
Your father was never hard to induce.
Hark! — can't you hear the sizzling juice?

JOCEAULME (*letting go of the cloth; to himself*)

The man drives me mad.
(*Then he grabs for the cloth again and catches it by one corner*) All right — go on.
I'll come and bring the —

PATELIN (*deftly twitching it away from him*)

Let *me* don
This cloth! It's light — no trouble: look,
Under my arm, safe in the nook!

[*So saying he has roughly folded the cloth and stuffed it under his left arm.*

JOCEAULME

No! It would look much better —

PATELIN (*with a wave of the hand*)

Enough!

I should never *think* of letting *you*
Carry for *me;* but you'll have the stuff
(*picking up his book and tucking it under the other arm*)
To fill you as fat as *this*, ere you're through!

JOCEAULME (*in whom Patelin's jocularity begins to awaken doubts*)

And I'll get my money as fast as I'm there?

PATELIN

You shall! But no, no! First the good fare!
Tender goose and bottle rare!
I am glad I had no cash about me.
Now you must dine and wine, and doubt me
As little as your father used
After *he*'d been well guzzled and goosed!

[*Joceaulme's appetites are such that the ambiguity of this speech is lost on him.*

JOCEAULME

Wait till I get my goods in!

[*He begins pulling them off the shelves and piling them up to take in.*

PATELIN

Nay,
I must tell the good wife the good news.

JOCEAULME (*pausing, the goods in his arms, with one last doubt*) You'll pay?
Gold?

[*Patelin nods, laughing, and Joceaulme disappears down right.*

PATELIN (*alone, chuckling*)

Gold — hm — gold! — Devil, not a slip!
(*To the audience, archly, as he goes left*)
He *set his price*, but he'll *get my scrip!*
To squeeze gold out of me will take some grip!
[*He goes off through the proscenium door, left.*

JOCEAULME (*reappearing for his yardstick and shears; chanting softly, gleefully to himself*)

They shall see nor sun nor moon,
Those gold crowns he'll give me soon!
I'll keep them under lock and key!
(*Leaning across the counter to look after him, and then leering at the audience*)
That scalawag pays twenty-three
Sous for cloth that's not worth twenty!
(*He bursts into laughter*)
Ha ha ha, he he he, ho ho ho ho ho!

[*The transverse curtain swings to the right, and shuts him off. The proscenium door down right opens suddenly on-stage, and Patelin, without his book and with the cloth concealed under his gown, runs in, stops, leans forward, whistles, — and Guillemette re-enters, down left, still with her sewing in her hands.*

PATELIN

Whst! (*She comes to him, expectantly*) Well, have I?

GUILLEMETTE (*half eager, half afraid*)

What?

PATELIN (*smiles craftily; then, fingering her dress disdainfully*)

This dress —
What shall we do with it?
(*Guillemette's face too plainly asks, "Have you got*

a new one?") *Have* I? Guess!

[*He begins extracting the roll from under his gown.*

GUILLEMETTE (*as she sees its length*)

Holy Mother!

PATELIN (*flaunting one end of the long piece, and spreading it upon her*)

It becomes you well!

GUILLEMETTE (*wildly*)

What have you done?! *Who* would sell,
And who's to pay?

PATELIN

Good Saints, it's paid!

GUILLEMETTE

How? You hadn't a sou!

PATELIN

Yes — one!
A client, too — a lamb that has strayed:
A simple case, as good as won.

GUILLEMETTE

A sou? — for this!

PATELIN (*sanctimoniously*)

For God, my dear,—
To bind the bargain.

GUILLEMETTE (*backing from him, with one end of the cloth, to see how long it is*)

Holy Mother,
You've played some prank and — (*she sits suddenly*) I feel queer!
(*She drops the cloth, which lies all along the floor, and pointing at Patelin says very fast*)
You swore, or gave a note, or —

PATELIN

What a pother!

I said 'twas paid! And the merchant's not mad —
Just fleeced and bled like his own sheep flocks!

GUILLEMETTE (*faintly*)

Who was it?

PATELIN

Who but his father's lad —
The blockhead chip of that line of blocks —
Guillaume Joceaulme the draper?

GUILLEMETTE (*tremblingly*)

How much?

PATELIN (*cheerfully*)

Seven francs gold, a fat roast goose,
Some rare red wine, —

GUILLEMETTE (*terrified*)

And a gallows noose!
He'll *skin* us!

PATELIN (*approaching her comfortingly, gathering up the cloth meanwhile*)

Nay but he shall *not* touch
A hair! He must split that sou with God,
For there's not one other pea in the pod!
(*Standing before her, the cloth in his arms, like a lecturer*)
As my profession it behooved,
I paid in *words* — fine fare, that moved
His filial soul to emulate
The sire I lauded — *such* a bait
Of lies! "His spitten image you are,"
Say I, "and this cloth's on a par
With *his*" — and so, he gives it me;
And hither he comes —

GUILLEMETTE (*tickled, naïvely reassured, laughing*)

Ho, it's your fee!

He'll never get it back! The Crow
Dropped her cheese to the Fox below
That praised her song —

[*Patelin stops her sharply with a gesture, and listens a moment for some sound down right.*

PATELIN

He's coming, quick,
To eat a goose. We'll give him a trick:
Feathers to pluck (*waving the cloth and then hiding it under the mattress*), then bones to pick!
(*He tears off his hat and gown*)
I'll be in bed here, deliriously sick.
(*Getting into his nightgown*)
He'll begin braying for his gold (brick).
You groan, and tell him "Hush!" (*Arranging the bedclothes*) He'll kick.
Say I'm shamming, and "it's a bit thick" —
(*Donning his comic nightcap with bobbing tassel*)
Then *I'll* take a turn — and he'll not stick!

[*He jumps into bed and pulls the curtains.*

GUILLEMETTE (*with enthusiasm*)

By the soul that sleeps in me
(*laughing as he pops his head out between the curtains*)
I'll weep salt tears, your plight to see!

PATELIN (*softly*)

No laughing now! I'm near death's door.

[*And he vanishes again behind the curtains.*

GUILLEMETTE (*sobered*)

Too true. (*She tiptoes toward the right*) He's coming!

[*Patelin's feet emerge from under the curtains, depositing his half-doffed shoes quietly on the floor; then his nose sticks out between the curtains.*

PATELIN

Mind the floor!

[*Guillemette darts back and kicks the shoes under the bed; then sits by the table, dolefully sewing as at the play's beginning. There is a jovial knock on the door down right.*

JOCEAULME (*calling as he enters*)

Ho, Master Peter!

GUILLEMETTE (*as though startled, jumping up, her finger on her lips*)

Oh, sir, speak lower!

JOCEAULME (*cheerily*)

Save you, fair dame!

GUILLEMETTE

In mercy, lower!

JOCEAULME (*puzzled*)

Huh? What's the matter?

GUILLEMETTE (*feigning amazement*)

Bless my soul!

JOCEAULME

Where is he?

GUILLEMETTE

Alas, where should he be?

JOCEAULME

The — Who?

GUILLEMETTE

'Tis unkind to be droll
Sir, here, where he has lain for three
Months past, poor martyr, motionless!

JOCEAULME

Who has?

GUILLEMETTE

Excuse me, I dare speak

No louder. He's asleep. I bless
The Saints he's resting! He's *so* weak!

JOCEAULME

Who?

GUILLEMETTE

Master Peter.

JOCEAULME

What's *he* got?
(*Suspicious but still jovial*)
Six yards of cloth of mine, that's what!

GUILLEMETTE (*thunderstruck*)

He?

JOCEAULME (*sweetly*)

Out of my shop, just now.
Pay me; I've not much time.

GUILLEMETTE

I vow
You're joking. This is not the place!

JOCEAULME (*still jocose*)

No more nonsense! My money! Chase!

GUILLEMETTE (*piteously*)

Oh, Guillaume, don't fool round here!
Seek elsewhere, if you seek good cheer!

JOCEAULME

Didn't he bid me come and dine —
Eat fat goose and drink his wine?
Didn't he talk of fourscore crowns
Gold, laid by, to get him new gowns?

GUILLEMETTE

If he did, it was in delirium.
He's not been himself for weeks and weeks.

JOCEAULME (*positively*)

Himself or another, he's not dumb!

You hear things happening when *he* speaks:
Goose sizzling, and the clink of gold!
(*Suddenly, sure he'll catch her in the joke now*)
Where are the six yards that I sold?

GUILLEMETTE

You're crazy! We have nothing at all!
He sick for months, and I like to fall
For hunger! — This *is* a friendly call!

JOCEAULME (*troubled*)

No wine, no goods, no gold? (*He looks around and notes the poverty of the room. His face falls, but he tries to make the best of it*) So be it!
My seven francs silver, then! (*He sees by Guillemette's face that he'll not get even that. More peremptorily*) Let's see it!

GUILLEMETTE

Oh, dear, sir, every one's not so fain
To laugh —

JOCEAULME

Stop! Fetch him!

GUILLEMETTE (*angry*)

The curse of Cain
Fetch *you!* He's nearer Heaven than earth!

JOCEAULME (*resolved to put a stop to the jest at once*)

Isn't this room, this bed, the berth
(*with bitter clarity*)
Of Master Peter Patelin?

GUILLEMETTE (*tearfully*)

Yea,
His last! He's wailed for one of clay
These thirteen weeks!

JOCEAULME

The Devil take him!

(*Guillemette is horrified — crosses herself*)
May I (*sarcastically*) not make that prayer?
GUILLEMETTE (*beseeching*)
Don't wake him!
Speak lower!
JOCEAULME (*very sarcastic*)
Shall I whisper it here?
(*Pointing to her neck, then to her breast, then to her legs*)
Or here? or here? or down a well?
Or in a tomb?
GUILLEMETTE (*overcome at the word*)
Oh, dear, oh, dear!
JOCEAULME (*loudly*)
No, I'll not whisper, even in hell!
I'm not used to this "lower" stuff.
The truth is, Master Peter's bluff
Took six yards from me without paying!
GUILLEMETTE
When?
JOCEAULME
Just now!
GUILLEMETTE
What are you saying?
When fourteen weeks he's lain here flat?
Get out of here with your crazy chat!
JOCEAULME
Why do you scream?
GUILLEMETTE (*hushed again*)
It's you, my soul,
That are making all the noise!
JOCEAULME (*soft but emphatic*)
He stole
Six yards, of woolen cloth, —

GUILLEMETTE

You're cracked!
Or have you been drinking?

JOCEAULME (*outraged*)

Drink?! It lacked
But that! Not *your* wine! "Come and drink,"
He said, "Your father *liked* to clink
With me" — but now I only want (*whining*)
My money —

GUILLEMETTE

That's a cruel taunt!
We have no money, and no wine!
For fifteen weeks I've not seen sign
Of money —

JOCEAULME (*desperate*)

Then my cloth! I'll take
It back.

GUILLEMETTE

Who did you give it to?

JOCEAULME

God's light, to him!

GUILLEMETTE

For pity's sake!
It happened in your brain then!

JOCEAULME (*wiping his brow with the back of his hand*)

Whew!

GUILLEMETTE

He has no need of cloth! He'll wear
No robe but white now, I declare!
Nor leave his bed except feet first.

JOCEAULME

It happened since morning, then!

SCENE FROM *PATELIN* AS PRODUCED BY IRVING PICHEL AT THE ST. LOUIS ARTISTS' GUILD THEATER, IN DECEMBER, 1917

The mock delirium

GUILLEMETTE

I've nursed

Him sixteen weeks, I tell you!

JOCEAULME

'Sblood,

I spoke with him! — I'm in an ague!

(*To the audience*)

Give credit, and it'll always plague you!

I never trust but I'm "done" like mud!

(*He turns back to Guillemette and shouts*)

My money or my cloth!

GUILLEMETTE (*louder*)

Don't scream!

JOCEAULME

It's you!

[*They stand close together, glaring at each other.*

PATELIN (*faintly from behind the bed curtains*)

Ow, ow, ow, — what a dream!

JOCEAULME (*quick-eyed and open-mouthed*)

I hear him!

GUILLEMETTE (*accusingly*)

Yes!

PATELIN (*poking his head out weakly*)

Guillemette!

Lift me; get me something wet;

Stop the braying of that ass!

(*In a faint whine*)

Rub my soles and let me pass!

JOCEAULME (*forgetting his fierceness in astonishment*)

Good Master Patelin, I am here

For seven francs you pledged me.

PATELIN (*paying no attention*)

Wife!

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Come here, cover me. . . . God's my life,
(*in a rising wail of anguished protest*)
Drive those black beasts from off my bier!

JOCEAULME
What's this?

GUILLEMETTE
Alas, *now* will you believe?

PATELIN (*getting out of bed: mysteriously*)
Thou canst not see what I perceive.
(*Pointing in the air, he creeps right in front of the astounded draper*)
There is a black monk flying! Catch him!
(*He vigorously tweaks Joceaulme's long nose*)
Give him a stole!
(*He drops on all fours, hunching and spitting like a cat*) Cat, cat, go scratch him!
(*Joceaulme in some fear retires up-stage. Patelin pretends not to realize his presence in the least but goes on with his imaginary cat chasing the flying monk*)
Meaow, meaow! Up, up he goes!

GUILLEMETTE (*down left of him, lifting him by the shoulders and speaking as though to a baby*)
Aren't you ashamed? The poor man's nose!
(*Then sharply across him to the draper*)
But serves you right! Your noise upset him.

JOCEAULME (*stammering*)
Since he came from market, did it get him?

GUILLEMETTE (*supporting Patelin, who seems to have fainted in her arms; in the utmost astonishment*)
Market?

JOCEAULME (*hesitantly*)
In truth, I think he was there.

(*Coming back to the one straw of conviction he can clutch*)

My money for the cloth I let him
Have! (*Patelin doubtfully opens one eye at him*)
Please, Master Patelin! Be fair!

PATELIN (*dolefully sick*)

Ah, doctor, those black pills you gave me
Ruined my jaws — Saint Joseph save me!

JOCEAULME

What business is that of mine?

PATELIN (*deaf to him, clutching his arm in entreaty*)

No more! They're bitter, and they cling!
They've made me cough up everything!

JOCEAULME

They have not! Where's my goose, my wine?
(*Aside*) Soul of my father, this is funny!

GUILLEMETTE

Heaven hang you, shoo! In the Devil's name
If not in God's!

JOCEAULME (*desperately*)

My cloth or my claim
Before I budge!

PATELIN (*still to Joceaulme as to his doctor: very piteously*) My symptoms show
My certain death, eh, doctor?
(*Clasping Guillemette as in a spasm*) Woe!

GUILLEMETTE (*furiously*)

You'll kill him with this hue and cry!

JOCEAULME

Dear Lord, I only want my money!

PATELIN (*to Guillemette, close in her arms, but referring to the "doctor"*)

Although he stays, don't let me die!

GUILLEMETTE

He takes you for his doctor! Hence!
(*Joceaulme is about to bray again*)
He'll *die* of the dope that *you* dispense!
(*Half helping, half dragging Patelin back to the bed*)
Alas, he's had *their* horrid broth
Four months —

JOCEAULME

But I will have my cloth!
How this befell him, I don't see!
He came, we bargained, it *seems* to me. . . .
[*He runs over the bargain in his mind.*

GUILLEMETTE (*getting Patelin to bed*)

Poor Christian, helpless here while brutes
Dun you for fancied debts with hoots
And howls —

JOCEAULME (*his ruminations terminating in the same old formula*) Six yards for seven francs!

GUILLEMETTE (*as to a second patient*)

My good sir, your memory's failing.
Go and sleep, or *you*'ll be ailing.
(*Going to him, confidentially*)
Besides, folks *might* catch on to your pranks
And think you came here after *me* —
Now that my husband's helpless, see, —
And tell the doctors that *are* coming.

JOCEAULME (*reckless*)

Let them! (*Then aside*) Lord, what a fix I'm in!
(*With one last endeavor to believe it is all a mere joke on him*)
You have no goose here?

GUILLEMETTE

Goose? — Still strumming

On that string? — Only the goose *you*'ve been!
(*Bitterly*)
It's no meat for sick folks!

JOCEAULME (*slow to relinquish his last hope*)
Still,
I thought surely —

GUILLEMETTE (*frantic*)
Go away! You're ill!
[*And as though overcome with the strain of it all, she begins to cry.*

JOCEAULME (*miserably*)
Maybe you're right. Don't cry. I must think!
He took six yards all in one piece —
He, him there, that's ready to sink
Into his grave now, — or else to fleece
Me with flamming! My wits *are* under the weather
But these things can't be fitted together!
(*Unable any longer to convince himself, he turns to Guillemette*)
Under his elbow, so, he took it.
(*She gives him one look, and again begins to cry*)
No, I'm dreaming. — I'd never trust
My goods to any one, straight or crooked,
Let alone *him* —
[*He stands, wavering helplessly.*

GUILLEMETTE (*jumping at him and shoving him toward the door, right*) You really must
Go home! Maybe you'll find you mistook.

JOCEAULME
I can't have — but I'll just go and look.

GUILLEMETTE (*as she pushes him out*)
Maybe, your cloth is still *there!*
[*She shuts the door after him, and fastens it.*

PATELIN (*popping his head out, all eagerness*)
Safe?

GUILLEMETTE
Sh!

PATELIN
Let him look, long! It makes me chafe
To lie still here! (*Coming through the curtains and stretching*) Wasn't he punctual, though!

GUILLEMETTE
Don't get up! He'll be sure to know.

PATELIN (*sitting on the bed, gaily*)
Met his match, did Sir Suspicion!

GUILLEMETTE (*laughing at the memory*)
His wits *are* in a weird condition!

PATELIN
Don't you giggle. We're not through yet.
He'll be back.

GUILLEMETTE (*giggling still*)
His bill's not due yet!
What'll we give him this time? — Oh,
His nose! his nose, when you pulled it!

PATELIN (*warningly*)
Low!
Quit your cackling! Here he comes.
(*A rush of irate feet and a furious pounding on the door*)
Only listen how he drums!
[*Both double up with repressed mirth.*

GUILLEMETTE
He's going mad!

PATELIN
But I'll be madder!

JOCEAULME (*out, right: bawling*)
Ho, there! Open! Viper! Adder!

GUILLEMETTE (*opening the door for him with a suddenly horrified face*)
How you yell!
JOCEAULME
You're laughing, are you?
Pay me, promptly, or I'll jar you!
(*Rushing across at Patelin*)
Liar! quack! swindler! thief!
GUILLEMETTE (*following him, woebegone*)
Laughing, say you! I'd as lief
Laugh at a corpse. His mind is gone.
He babbles and sings in many tongues,
He storms, he raves, with leathern lungs!
I must weep *and* laugh as I look on.
JOCEAULME (*turning on her, bullying*)
Well, laugh or weep, — but I must be paid!
GUILLEMETTE (*weepily*)
For what? Is this the same joke you made?
[*Patelin, clinging to the curtains, gravely mounts the bed.*
JOCEAULME
It's *your* joke. I'm a sober draper.
He can't fool *me* with his solemn caper!
PATELIN (*obliviously assuming the romantic pose of a troubadour*)
Ha! Now for the Queen Guitar!
She gave birth to twenty little guitars
Yesterday! — Come, children, afar!
I'm your godfather among the stars!
[*He steps airily off the bed and crashes to the floor.*
GUILLEMETTE (*running to him and picking him up*)
Oh, think about God the Father,
Not guitars!

JOCEAULME (*unimpressed*)
You humbug — pay up!

GUILLEMETTE (*over her shoulder with a sob, as she gets Patelin into bed*)
This is what you've done with your blather!

JOCEAULME (*blustering*)
Come now! Isn't it mine?

GUILLEMETTE (*closing the bed curtains*)
You play up
This daft idiocy to craze him!
Any one could see you're mad.

JOCEAULME
Mad as the devil!

GUILLEMETTE (*crossing herself breathlessly*)
Sh! You'll raise him!

JOCEAULME
Mad for my money!

GUILLEMETTE (*very earnestly*)
If I had
But aid, I'd tie you up. Do this
(*crossing herself again*).
Can you?

JOCEAULME (*exasperated, turning away*)
Oh, if I trust a soul
(*Patelin begins making queer noises, and the draper speaks slower, listening*)
With cloth — this — year —
(*A kind of distorted laugh volleys from the bed*)
Ha? hey? what's amiss?

PATELIN (*poking a preternaturally solemn face between the curtains*)
If *ducat*'s the word, mum as a mole!

(*He suddenly springs out and begins dancing about the room, his nightgown held high*)

Mère de diou, la coronade!

Que de l'argent il ne me sone!

(*Stopping immediately before Joceaulme*)

Hast understood, fair cousin?

GUILLEMETTE (*holding Patelin and explaining to Joceaulme*)

He once had an uncle in Limoges:

It's the language of that country.

JOCEAULME (*blustering in Patelin's face*)

Out on you, you took my cloth!

Under your arm you carried it off!

PATELIN (*taking Guillemette's hand and dancing off with her*)

Venez ens, doulce damiselle!

(*Glancing over his shoulder at the draper*)

Toadspawn, what's it after?

(*He suddenly drops his nightgown and assumes the priest*)

Avaunt, scullion! Avaunt the priest!

(*Advancing on Joceaulme as though to exorcize him*)

Though the Devil himself pop in at the feast,

May his laugh interrupt holy mass?

GUILLEMETTE (*behind, in a high cry*)

Extreme unction, he means! Alas!

[*Patelin executes another lightning change and becomes a Flemish wassailer.*

PATELIN

Whence comest thou, merry reveler?

(*He claps Joceaulme on the back*)

Now welcome, *lievë goodë man!*

Ick sal good vesen gevapen!

(*He takes both Joceaulme's hands and begins dancing around with him, — the draper resisting but dizzy*)
Grillë, grillë, stockë vonden!
Galopp, galopp, ein non gebonden!
(*He begins running round and round Joceaulme, shrieking*)
Ey! Vacht ein vile, pour le frimas!
(*He falls on his knees to Joceaulme, praying weakly*)
I would confess! Bring Brother Thomas!

JOCEAULME (*wildly to Guillemette*)
He talks in Dutch! Oh, why do you fret me?
My money, or else security, get me!

GUILLEMETTE
You're more of a lunatic than he!
[*Joceaulme seizes Patelin by the back of his night-gown and tries to pull him up.*

PATELIN
Zounds, what's after me now? A flea?
A mouse? — Bow wow! Meaow! Bow wow!
[*Alternately acting both parts of a cat-and-dog fight he backs into the corner of the room, up-stage.*

JOCEAULME
I don't see how he can stand this row!
(*The cat wins, with a terrifying screech and spring — toward lower left*)
He's certainly raving — the worst I ever!
[*Patelin now grabs the broom and straddles it, witchlike.*

GUILLEMETTE (*clinging to Joceaulme in horror*)
God help you!
[*Her horror communicates itself to him, as Patelin makes cabalistic signs and mutters spells at them.*

JOCEAULME (*his jaw beginning to wobble*)
What a gurgle and spluttering!

It's not Christian, that muttering!
Ods bodykins, he's bewitching me!

[*Patelin suddenly goes at him with the broom. Joceaulme flees around the room, Patelin after him, whacking the floor with the broom. Guillemette stands center, her eyes heavenward to keep from laughing, apparently in prayer.*

GUILLEMETTE (*loudly through the hubbub*)
He's dying! Send for the sacrament!

[*Joceaulme, trembling and panting, puts her between himself and his pursuer.*

PATELIN (*stopping, winds up the performance in stately Latin*)
Et bona dies sit vobis,
Magister amantissime,
Pater reverendissime!
Quo modo brulis?

[*He falls, as if unconscious.*

GUILLEMETTE (*in a frenzy*)
He's dead! Look how he foams with froth,
And steams! His heavenly part is going!

JOCEAULME (*shuddering and sweating*)
Some imps or devils took my cloth!
I'd better go. There's no knowing!

GUILLEMETTE (*kneeling beside Patelin, testing him for signs of life*)
Poor and forlorn!

JOCEAULME (*taking off his hat, as though in the presence of death*) Don't blame me!
Some evil spirit, it must be,
Tempted me to come here for money!
(*Solemnly to the audience*)
I' God's name, let my cloth be his

Who took it, without more ceremony!
I am well rid of it as it is!
(*Seeing that Patelin is beginning to revive, he jams on his hat again and tiptoes hastily to the door, right: turning there*)
He would confess to you, I think,
In private. Adieu!

GUILLEMETTE (*with the sob of sincerity*)
God's blessing sink,
And a poor mournful wife's, on you!

[*Joceaulme slips out and shuts the door.*

PATELIN (*raising his head to peek after him*)
He'll see spooks to-night! (*Jumping up*) Haloo!

GUILLEMETTE (*childishly*)
Didn't I do my part well?

PATELIN
Splendid!
Some goose he got, and gander too!
(*Running to the bed and pulling out the cloth*)
Off with the old, the ever-mended!
(*Tossing one end to Guillemette*)
Here's for us both to blossom anew!

[*Guillemette wraps the cloth around her and pivots to the right: Patelin does the same, pivoting to the left: they collide and hug.*

Far off, up right, a crier is faintly audible, proclaiming "The Court! The Court!" Patelin looks up, startled: wriggles out of the folds and dashes for his old gown and hat and shoes: and Guillemette retires with the cloth into the nook down left as the transverse curtain swings upon them. The flats behind the curtain, left, are quickly struck, freeing Guillemette and giving Patelin a chance to re-costume himself for his next speedy entrance.

Court Attendants carry in a dais from up right, and place it at the center of the left wall. Two gorgeously costumed bailiffs carry on the Judge's high-backed chair and set it on the dais, about a foot in front of the wall. The crowd returns, filling the background. Through them pushes the little Judge's Clerk, with a huge law-book (perhaps the same as Patelin had), and after him the puffing Judge. The Clerk patters to the dais and sits on it, opening his book and preparing to write in it. The Judge catches the eye of the gaudy Courtesan in the crowd, and flirts with her as he goes to his chair. The boy and girl in the forefront of the crowd, right, note this and imitate it. Lambkin slinks into the rear of the crowd, out of sight.

JUDGE (*standing before his chair, announcing indifferently*)

If there is any business here
This afternoon, the Court gives ear.
If not, the Court wants to adjourn.

[*With a glance at the Courtesan, he sits. Pause. As he starts to rise again, Joceaulme rushes through the crowd from up right.*

JOCEAULME (*breathless*)

My lawyer's on his way, your Honor.
Some lady made him wait upon her.
If you could wait till he return —

JUDGE (*interrupting, annoyed*)

Eh, Lord! I too have other calls!
If the defendant be at hand,
(*Joceaulme begins scanning the crowd*)
Make thy complaint. Be brief, and all's
Soon settled (*with a leer at the Courtesan*)! Thou art plaintiff, and
The other?

JOCEAULME (*had been worried: now spies him and points triumphantly*) There! I spy him, mum
As if he couldn't say *baa*, and hiding
In fear of justice!

JUDGE (*hailing the reluctant Shepherd in the crowd*)
Shepherd, come!
(*Lambkin is thrust forth by his neighbors, looking more vacant than ever*)
Stand forth. (*Pompously jocose*) What leads to your colliding?

JOCEAULME (*flustered*)
This is my case. For pity's sake
And charity's, I reared this snake
(*he is standing midway between the Judge and Lambkin, turning from one to the other: and as he is turned away Patelin slips in at the door down left, registers horror at finding Joceaulme to be the Shepherd's master, exchanges glances with Lambkin, and hides from the draper behind the Judge's chair*)
From infancy, and when I found
Him strong enough, I had him bound
My shepherd, set to keep my sheep;
But as true as you sit there,
Your Honor, not one lamb he'd spare!
Such havoc as he used to keep
Among my muttons!

JUDGE (*officiously*)
Did he share,
Or did you hire him?

PATELIN (*popping out on the Judge's left, his hand covering the right half of his face as though he had a toothache*) Ay, that's it!
I've heard he never paid him a bit!

[*The Judge is startled, but then recognizes Patelin and smiles a knowing greeting. Joceaulme recognizes him also, and gasps.*

JOCEAULME (*recovering his breath*)
The Devil fetch me, YOU?

PATELIN (*humbly returning the Judge's greeting*)
God bless you,
Sir, and grant your heart's desire (*with a glance at the Courtesan*).

JUDGE
Welcome, master. (*Turning back to Joceaulme*) So it was hire —

JOCEAULME (*pointing at Patelin, transfixed*)
It's him!

JUDGE (*looking again at Patelin*)
Ah — do your teeth distress you
Sir, that you hold your face?

PATELIN (*keeping his hand between his face and Joceaulme*) They ache
So that I dare not turn my head!
Proceed.

JUDGE (*turning back to Joceaulme, bored*)
Finish. What was it you said?

JOCEAULME (*still staring open-mouthed*)
By the rood, it's him, and no mistake!
(*Shooting out an accusing finger*)
'Twas to you I sold six yards of cloth!

JUDGE (*to Patelin, puzzled*)
What was he saying about *cloth?*

PATELIN (*swiftly*)
He's rambling, not being trained to speak clearly.
Perhaps the defendant —

JOCEAULME (*loudly*)

Not speak clearly, —
You thief, you fakir! *You* took my cloth!

PATELIN (*with coolest impudence*)

Save your breath to cool your broth!
(*To the Judge*)
I think he means, the stubborn fool,
That this poor shepherd sold the wool
That might have made six yards of cloth.

JOCEAULME (*madly*)

You have my six yards, I'll take oath!

JUDGE

Drivel! Make haste and state your case.

PATELIN (*amused*)

He's *in* such haste that he can't retrace
Where he left off! We must set him right.
(*Chuckling at Joceaulme's impotent fury*)
My teeth ache, but I must laugh at the sight!

JUDGE

Come now! The shepherd and the sheep!
Back to muttons!

PATELIN (*with mock sympathy*)

He's like to weep!

JOCEAULME (*hysterically*)

Six yards, worth seven francs, at one sweep!

JUDGE (*getting cross*)

Are we greenhorns? or tom fools?
Where do you think you are?

PATELIN (*watching Joceaulme's frenzy aloofly*)

He drools.
Doesn't he look *good!* But I would hint
The other party might help, by dint
Of a well-put question, to compose him.

JUDGE (*gratefully*)
True. Step forward, Shepherd.
(*Lambkin shambles forward; Joceaulme looks at him with a sudden resurgence of his vengeful feelings for him and the Judge nods to Patelin*) He knows him.
(*To Lambkin*) Speak.
LAMBKIN (*leaning forward, with a visible effort and exactly like a sheep*) Baaa.
JUDGE (*jumping*)
Here's torment! Baa?
What's that? Am I a goat?
LAMBKIN (*affirmatively*)
Baaa.
JUDGE (*with choler*) Ha!
Art thou mocking us?
PATELIN (*to the rescue*)
He's half-witted!
He thinks he's with his flocks! — scarce fitted
(*with a reproving look at Joceaulme*)
To fight a law-suit! (*As if yielding to a generous impulse*) I'll defend him!
JUDGE (*ironically*)
'Tis generous of you. He'll give no fee.
JOCEAULME (*amazed but disgusted*)
Why, he can talk as well as we!
He's a cheat, like you!
(*He scents the plot and calls out, pointing at Patelin*)
Ho — apprehend him!
JUDGE (*severely*)
Be quiet! Let the lawyer alone;
Come to the culprit!
JOCEAULME (*swallowing: tearful and confused*)
I will try,

Your Honor, but he can *never* atone —
You can't *conceive* the terrific lie!
However — another time! . . . I was saying
How my six yards — I mean my sheep —
(*snarling at the grinning Patelin*)
Oh, I'll swallow it whole for the present! — (*to the Judge*) praying
Your pardon! — this rogue stole them! cheap! —
Only twenty-three sous per yard!
(*The Judge frowns*)
Your Honor must forgive me: it's hard;
But he killed them, and said they died of scab,
And then when I *went* to his house, that drab
His wife pretended there *was* no goose —
(*The Judge scowls*)
But they really were healthy — it was a ruse!
He sold the wool that he stole — seven francs —
(*Shrieking at Patelin, who from behind the Judge's left shoulder has been continually mocking him*)
Ah, Master Peter, you played such pranks!

JUDGE (*intervening*)
Rime without reason, I call this!
He chatters of everything amiss.

PATELIN (*helpfully in his ear*)
It strikes me he may owe seven francs
To this poor shepherd.

JUDGE (*scornfully*)
They're two such cranks!

JOCEAULME (*in an ecstasy of rage*)
You're a fine rogue to talk of owing!
You *have* it, by God!

JUDGE (*roaring*)
What has he?

JOCEAULME (*deaf with fury*)

Crowing
Like this in my face and his Honor's! Wait!
For the present this shepherd shall pay *his* slate —
(*Turning and seeing Lambkin's vacant face*)
The dolt! He has plenty to think about!

PATELIN (*judicially*)

Pray listen to *him*, your Honor; no doubt
He can clear up (*The Judge nods impatiently, and Patelin steps forward, addressing Lambkin*) Come, friend, — Explain!

LAMKIN (*as before, as though he saw nothing*)

Baaa.

PATELIN (*affecting great astonishment*)

Holy Saints, are you really insane?

LAMBKIN (*in the tone of a calm "Why, of course!"*)

Baaa.

PATELIN (*smartly*)

I'm your lawyer, not a lamb.
(*He crosses to Lambkin's side: kindly*)
Now, yes or no. (*Whispering*) Keep it up!

LAMBKIN (*monotonously*)

Baaa.

PATELIN (*stepping back*)

Damn!
Whisper.
[*He puts his ear close to Lambkin's mouth.*

LAMBKIN (*barely audible*)

Baaa.

PATELIN (*stepping back, impatiently*)

Shout, ere it cost thee dear!

LAMBKIN (*loudly*)

Baaa!

PATELIN (*to the Judge, with a shrug and helpless wave of the hands*) 'Twas a madman summoned here
A silly innocent —

JOCEAULME (*in a high wail of utter astonishment and wrath*) Innocent! He!
You're a *couple* of wolves in lambs' wool! — (*To the crowd*) We —
We spoke all right this *morning!*
[*He turns to the Judge, hands out in a plea for understanding.*

PATELIN (*ironically superior*)
Yes.
Everything happened to you this morning!
You're hardly responsible.
(*With a wave of the hand he puts Joceaulme in the background, and crosses to the Judge*) Can we do less
Than free this fool (*Lambkin*)? — and *that* (*Joceaulme*) — with a warning?

JOCEAULME (*nearly speechless*)
What! Free him before I can make myself heard?

JUDGE (*loudly and bitterly*)
Vexation of soul is all that's incurred
From dealing with dolts and donkeys — male
Or female! The Court will adjourn.
[*He looks to see if the Courtesan is still there, and gets a sympathetic smile from her.*

JOCEAULME (*thunderstruck*)
Without bail?!
Won't they ever have to appear again?

PATELIN (*scornfully*)
What, a congenital idiot?
If your wits aren't weak, they're wandering then!

JOCEAULME (*through his clenched teeth*)
I know well enough what *you* got
By lying and dying —
[*He chokes at the memory, and foams at the mouth.*
PATELIN (*pityingly, to the Judge*)
Quiet him, sir!
(*Then accusingly to Joceaulme, pointing at Lambkin*)
Aren't you ashamed to make him squirm,
Poor silly, — and he as naked as a worm! —
For a little lamb's wool?!
(*Formally to the Judge*) We must demur!
JOCEAULME (*quite distracted, with frothing lips*)
He did kill my sheep! But you took my cloth!
Your Honor, (*screaming*) they're *both* thieves!
PATELIN (*shrinking back from him, with rapid warning*)
He's all froth!
He's rabid! Look out!
JUDGE (*promptly and imperatively*)
I forbid you to speak.
(*He rises and addresses Lambkin over Joceaulme's head*)
Go back to your sheep! (*To the crowd*) I discharge the freak.
LAMBKIN (*shambling over to Joceaulme: impudently in his face*)
Baaa!
JOCEAULME (*with great difficulty restraining his rancor at Lambkin, turning and spitting violently at Patelin*)
But my claim is against *you!*
(*Patelin turns away, left, contemptuously*) Stop!
PATELIN (*to the Judge*)
He'll never stop yelling.
JUDGE (*sternly*)
Be off to your shop,

And never bring suit before me again!
(*Joceaulme drops back, crushed. To Lambkin*)
Thou too — forever keep out of my ken,
No matter what warrants or summons thou'rt served!

PATELIN (*quickly*)
Thank the Court.

LAMBKIN (*thanking the Court for more than Patelin yet dreams*) Baa.

JUDGE (*paternally to the limp draper*)
It's all you deserved.

JOCEAULME (*weakly; pointing at Patelin*)
But him?

JUDGE (*shortly*)
I said "Be off!" (*To Patelin*) Good day!
(*With a wink toward the Courtesan*)
I have business elsewhere.

PATELIN (*sympathetically*)
May it be gay!

JUDGE (*more cordially*)
Will you come sup with me?

PATELIN (*he wants to for both physical and professional reasons, but he is painfully conscious of his old gown and he knows he must get his fee from Lambkin now or never, — so he takes refuge in his fictitious toothache again, leaving either way open to him later. With his hand to his teeth significantly*)
Ah — if I may.

JUDGE (*loudly announcing*)
The Court is adjourned!

[*His Clerk, who has been comically scribbling in the big book everything that Joceaulme and Lambkin said — not without an occasional pained expression — slams it shut and jumps up. The bailiffs carry the*

Photo by White, N. Y.

SCENE FROM THE TRIAL IN *PATELIN* AS PRODUCED BY THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS, NEW YORK

Designed by Lee Simonson

chair, and the attendants the dais, off through the crowd that rapidly melts away. The Clerk follows them; then the Courtesan, with a triumphant look at Joceaulme that shows she has not forgotten their tiff that morning; then the Judge, still flirting stoutly with her. The boy and girl, right, nudge each other and laugh. They stay, watching the three who stand center, Joceaulme in the middle impotently glaring at the nonchalant Patelin.

JOCEAULME

A downright robber, that's what you are!
First my goods and now my sheep!
(*With bitter determination*)
You'll pay!

PATELIN (*condescendingly*)

For what? Your wits roam far!
(*Amused*) Who do you take me for, in your sleep?

JOCEAULME (*to show his contempt for this pretense, imitates Lambkin*)

Baaa!

PATELIN (*smoothly*)

Perhaps you think that I
Am Master Brainless? [1] — No reply?

JOCEAULME (*savagely*)

Perhaps you think that I'm an ass!
(*Patelin bows assent*)
It's you, all right — your voice, your brass!

PATELIN

Mightn't it be one Master Peter —
What's his name — Patelin, who's been sick?

JOCEAULME

Didn't I see *you* sick, you cheater?!

[1] Very likely a character in a contemporary Morality Play that the creator of Patelin had earlier acted.

PATELIN (*mildly surprised*)
I? Why, what's the matter with Nick?
JOCEAULME
You! It must have been you I saw!
There's no Nick here follows the law!
PATELIN (*gently indignant*)
Not old Nick?
[*He suddenly looks very much like "Old Nick" the Devil.*
JOCEAULME (*gasping*)
'Twas you took my cloth!
PATELIN (*reprovingly*)
And you trusted Old Nick! — Oh, the flame and the moth!
Limbo for you!
JOCEAULME (*in sudden panicky doubt*)
If you're still sick in bed,
I can talk to you there.
PATELIN (*easily*)
Unless I be dead.
JOCEAULME (*in further fright, crossing himself*)
H'm! — I'll look in your house, and see
If you're there, or your corpse. If you are —
[*He crosses Patelin toward the door down left.*
PATELIN (*stopping him with a tap on the shoulder: mysteriously*)
You'll agree
That you've lost what you hold most dear. That's — what?
JOCEAULME (*daunted: looks at him, at the door, at him again*)
Well, I'm damned if you are, and damned if you're not!
[*He escapes quickly by the door down right, crossing himself with one more backward glance as he disappears.*

PATELIN (*relaxing, and turning to Lambkin*)
Well, Lambkin?
LAMBKIN (*appreciatively*)
Baaa.
PATELIN
Come hither. Come!
Was it well done?
LAMBKIN (*edging off toward upper right*)
Baaa.
PATELIN Don't act dumb.
He's gone. Didn't I get thee acquitted?
LAMBKIN
Baaa.
PATELIN (*impatiently, moving towards him*)
You needn't still act half-witted!
Nobody's here.
[*The two children, now sitting on the stool, right, chuckle.*
LAMBKIN (*peering about for the best escape*)
Baaa.
PATELIN (*superior and abrupt*)
I must go.
Pay me.
LAMBKIN (*a long, low bleat that says "not on your life"*)
Baaaa.
PATELIN (*beginning to be apprehensive, and trying flattery*) Oh, *you* did it, I know!
He was left in the lurch when you kept from laughing.
LAMBKIN (*having difficulty to keep from laughing now*)
Baaa.
PATELIN (*coaxing*)
Why baa? That's over. No chaffing!
Pay me the gold crowns.

LAMBKIN (*backing up-stage with a prolonged bleat*)
Baaaa.

PATELIN (*pursuing, his hand out*)
My fee!
(*Reproachfully*)
Is this the most you intend for me?
(*Beguilingly*)
One crown! — (*Fiercely*) Upon my oath, you shall pay me!
Unless you can fly! (*Attempting to corner him, right*) Why attempt to delay me?

LAMBKIN (*backing against the stool; the children stand, laughing, one on each side*)
Baaa.

PATELIN (*aware of the children and angered still more by them*) Is this mockery all I'm to get?
(*Wheedling*)
I was so proud of you — and am yet!

LAMBKIN (*unmoved*)
Baaa.

PATELIN (*whimsically*)
You are rhyming; this is prose.
(*With a new idea, seductively*)
If you'll come to my house (*indicating the door down left*), you shall have new clothes
For your money.

LAMBKIN (*cunningly*)
Baaa.

PATELIN (*wildly, almost pathetically*)
Would you feed *me* goose?
(*He bears down on the Shepherd violently; Lambkin dodges about to escape him, but Patelin keeps between him and the exit up right*)

God in Heaven! to suffer such abuse
From an oaf, a churl, a numbskull!

LAMBKIN (*agilely dodging*)

Baaa!

PATELIN (*pausing, out of breath and impeded by his gown*)

But the goslings outstrip the gander!
(*He sinks down on the stool; regretfully*) Ah,
I thought myself the foremost cheat
At home, abroad, whom none could beat
At giving words for payment due
On Doomsday! — But, rogue, I shall sue!

LAMBKIN (*responding gratefully to the Boy, who has gotten to Patelin's left, behind him, and is showing Lambkin mutely the clear way off*)

Baaa!

PATELIN (*jumps up, seizes and stops him as he runs by*)

I'll have you clapped in jail!

LAMBKIN (*in a high, triumphant voice*)

The Judge said I need never come back!
(*Patelin lets him go*)
Baaa! (*Fleeing, up right*) You'll never find me!

PATELIN (*left alone and desolate, center*)

Alack!
That such a grand idea should fail!

[*The two children, the boy left and the girl right, run at him with pointing, taunting fingers and cry "Baaa!"*

CURTAIN

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

A Miracle Play adapted from
The Pageant of the Barbers and Wax-chandlers
in the
Chester Cycle of Miracles
and from the Book of Brome
found at Brome Hall, Suffolk

Presented in a version by Sam Hume at
The Greek Theater, Berkeley, California, October, 1907,
The Auditorium, St. Paul, Minnesota, Christmas, 1915,
The Arts and Crafts Theater, Detroit, Michigan, January, 1917, and
The Artists' Guild Theater, St. Louis, Missouri, Christmas, 1917;
and in the present version at the Municipal Theater, Northampton,
Massachusetts, Christmas, 1918.

INTRODUCTION

THE play of Abraham and Isaac from Chapter 22 of Genesis — symbolizing as it did to the mediæval mind the sacrifice by God the Father of God the Son, for man's sake, and appealing also to fundamental, almost biological human emotions, so strongly as to be still (apart from any religious dogma) deeply worth-while and wonderful for us — was one of the most regularly and widely acted English Miracle Plays. Six different versions of it are known to us: one in each of the four cycles that have been preserved as such, one in Ireland, and the isolated play discovered at Brome Hall, Suffolk. The last-named seems to have been adapted *circa* 1470–1480, from the Chandlers' pageant in the Chester cycle, or else both had some original in common, for in many places the phrasing of the two plays is almost identical, or would be save for the difference in the rhyme-scheme. The Chester Miracle is the more stark, striking, and sublime, — obviously the better fitted for big-scale production before a multitude and as one act (or episode, as at Oberammergau) in a greater whole after the manner of the Guild Cycles described in Volume I of this series, or in Christmas Community celebrations to-day; but the Brome play, more featly developed and varied dramatically and poetically, is for Little Theater presentation far more intimate, and an artistic unit. It seems to be made for a special, perhaps a private performance, and the total lack of any the-

ologic lesson in the epilogue, which deals instead, and very poignantly, with the necessity of parents' submitting meekly to those bereavements even commoner in the fifteenth century than in the twentieth, points to a non-ecclesiastic authorship and intent. Perhaps the lord of the manor at Brome had lately lost a beloved son, and his chaplain made this play especially to comfort and reprove his grief.

The conjecture also may explain the tender realism with which Isaac is so minutely and lovingly characterized (far more, in spite of the seeming sameness of their speeches, than the Chester play's austere formality allowed), and the happy theatric touch of Isaac's ignorance at first of his reprieve, and nervous gladness, painfully sweet, thereafter, which are a great increment to the drama's human, inescapable appeal. Professor A. W. Pollard of Oxford thinks so highly of this addition rounding out the action (for in the Chester play Isaac never speaks once after being saved from death) that he includes it in an appendix to his edition of *Abraham and Isaac* in *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes*, and suggests that the Chester play, at the time it became incorporated in a longer pageant through the decline in the number and wealth of the Chester guilds, may have been cut down from an original version more like the Brome play. Certainly the sharp and sudden commencement and close of the Chester Miracle, startling and effective as the former doubtless is, hint strongly at such curtailment and compression; and the cruelty in it of God's unprepared, unmotivated first cry of command must both strike many modern auditors unpleasantly and — except they know their testament — leave

them as much deceived as Abraham himself and perhaps less submissive. Splendid, therefore, for some intents and places, as the Chester play's abrupt beginning is, the present adapter has prefixed an abbreviated opening from the Brome text that will technically introduce Abraham and Isaac and reveal God's providence and purpose in a conventionally permissible though unrealistic murmur, not heard by Abraham, before His sudden smiting utterance. Similarly, in the Brome play as in this, Isaac is by convention deaf both to God's command and to the angel who saves him.

The sacrifice of the sheep, too, — symbolized, necessarily, on the pageant-wagon and with the many repetitions of the Chester performance, but apparently carried out in action and reality at Brome Hall — is here reintroduced in a practicable way that yet permits some expression of Isaac's frolic delight, both childish and thrilling, wherein the whole audience may draw breath and smile after their strain and awe.

For modern readers, the Chester pageant of which *Abraham and Isaac* became part is printed (in a none too careful version) in Everyman's Library, and the Brome play has been "translated" — with frequent slight changes that are ingenious but often needless — by Professor C. G. Child in the Riverside Literature Series. For the present adaptation, Professor Pollard's text, in his collection above mentioned, has formed the basis, and Professor J. M. Manly's text of the Brome play, in *Specimens of the Pre-Shakesperian Drama*, has been much used for the changes and interpolations of the editor. These latter may require further explanation and apology, for the editor

is deeply obliged and indebted to Mr. Sam Hume of the University of California — formerly for two seasons the director of the Arts and Crafts Theater, Detroit, and probably the most successful Little Theater director in the country — for the use of the version made by him, many years ago, and successfully tested in at least four different productions; and yet he has presumed to "adapt" this version still further, and weaken it, as some may think, with dilutions from the Brome play. There seemed, however, to be little need of reprinting Mr. Hume's text intact, since it is directly drawn, without adaptation or omission, from Professor Pollard's book: the Chester play as far as line 444, then two passages from Appendix IV, the Brome play, lines 333–347 and 409–435, and finally the Expositor's speech from the Chester play again, lines 461–484. The version may thus be easily reconstructed by any one who wishes, with the help of the stage directions here given, — the most important of which are all Mr. Hume's except as concerns the sacrifice of the lamb, which he entirely omits; and perhaps for heroic scale or out-of-door productions, or when the play is given as part of a larger, semi-religious community celebration, this will be the wisest course for the busy director to pursue. In any event, to Mr. Hume must be given all credit both for first venturing the revival and for his ample, iterated proof of its stage value; whereas the arrangement which follows herein may in future prove less thoroughly theatric, as it is less faithful also to the letter of its originals, than his directer, simpler adaptation. Its main drawback (a petty one, as it turned out in practice) seems to the editor himself to be the

irregularity and confusion of its rhyme scheme. The Brome play is very free in its stanzaic structure and its verse conforms with notable sympathy to the modulations of the drama; but the Chester play, which is the basis of the ensuing version and frequently crops out in it with pristine ruggedness, is couched in unvaried stanzas (rhyming aaabcccb) which while not monotonous give it a severity chiming well with its ritualistic purpose; and to mingle the two styles so much more intricately than did Mr. Hume betrays a divided purpose. Each case of alternative wording was considered individually, and the phrasing which seemed the most effective employed, with only enough concern as to which play it derived from to make certain that no line went unrhymed. Stylistic purists have therefore ground for objections; but just as the two epilogues have been conjoined so that each moral, we hope, confirms the other, so the two texts have here been interwoven that the downright strength of the Chester and the subtler art of the Brome might each reinforce the resulting play's appeal to a modern Little Theater audience. The object was a pliable drama from which anything might be dropped that disturbed whatever style were selected by the producer interested — for the play *must* be stylized, in one mood or another — without injury to the whole. It should thus be fitted for production under a great variety of conditions: with many and rich accessories or with none, in a garden, in a schoolroom, hall, playhouse, or vast auditorium. It may be simply acted, by the four or five speakers, or it may have all the contagious choral, churchly glamour which Mr. Hume would cast around it.

Of his own version, Mr. Hume writes:

"This adaptation, which embodies the results of a number of experiments before both large and small audiences, is intended primarily to furnish a working 'script' for the Little Theater director, and to bring to the various Little Theater groups throughout the country a simple, clear and practical arrangement of one of the finest and most dramatic of the old English Miracle Plays. The spelling has been modernized, except where it was necessary to indicate the proper syllabication of the spoken word, and the punctuation has been simplified and made a guide to the actual delivery of the lines. Often, however, an old word has been retained when we felt that it was more suitable, more musical, or a more euphonious rhyme. The verse should be read deliberately, accenting the rhythm and pronouncing all syllables with clean-cut enunciation. The play is highly emotional throughout, but it should be acted with some reserve and its emotional values brought out through the modulations, inflections and colorings of the voice and not by changes in tempo. Certain passages, as for example God's speech and Abraham's replies to God and to the Angel, should be delivered in a recitative manner, — almost intoned. The action of the piece is meager and deliberate, and underlying it there should be the subtle suggestion of a solemn service or ritual being performed. By symbolizing some of the realistic elements of the original, and by treating the whole in a more or less formal and ritualistic manner, the production gains in dignity and dramatic power; but this ritualistic treatment should not be so pressed that there is any slighting or weakening of

the strong human qualities so beautifully informed in the speeches of the old father and his gentle son."

Some description, however fragmentary, of the way Mr. Hume as producer has carried out his own counsel as adapter will no doubt be welcome here. At St. Paul in 1915 he gave the play in the immense Auditorium, seating ten thousand; and at Detroit a year later he produced it again in his little Arts and Crafts Theater. In St. Paul he erected, at one side of the oval Auditorium, a high "stage," of eleven steps to a narrow landing and eight more to the altar, flanked by broad square buttresses of beaver-board. Through the half-covered tops of these, lights glowed upward and inward upon the actors and the brilliant blue-and-gold altar cloth and decorative reredos above. This stage was all stippled a creamy buff, gleaming warmly against the encircling hangings of soft black (all the black Canton flannel in the city!), and was approached by a beaver-board pathway from the Auditorium door, along which and up the steps a wide strip of dark matting was laid. On this the characters entered — the accessory chorus of monks commencing their Gregorian chant while still outside, so that as the house lights dimmed, the liturgic music swelled and the cowled figures paced in amidst the audience, followed by Abraham carrying a brazier and Isaac (in this case a full-grown professional actor, since only a strong, trained voice could carry the play to all the auditors in the huge hall) bearing his faggots. The monks grouped themselves around the stage, Isaac paused at the foot, and Abraham ascended to the landing. There complete darkness fell, and a mighty searchlight suddenly blazed down on Abraham,

turned full front to receive it open-armed, from a high gallery in the loft of the Auditorium directly opposite the stage. Thus the Voice of God pealed down from far above the audience's heads. The action then proceeded on the upper steps, that it might be visible to all, without pause save when Abraham knotted the bandage over his son's eyes. The appearance of the Angel was of course the sensation of the performance, and was effected in sudden darkness followed by spotlights from the aperture overhead which cast rings of iridescent color on the very tall armored figure and his wings, hand-made of galvanized iron, twelve feet high, and arching forward over his head since some spectators saw him almost in profile. The player of the Angel was posed in the Auditorium balcony immediately above the stage, with the black hangings drawn forward to a point in front of him and a supplementary semicircle draped a few feet behind him. At the cue, each side of the projecting hangings before him was drawn sharply back [1] and he stood instantaneously revealed and coruscant. The monumental and stunning quality (by universal testimony) of this production was undoubtedly due to Mr. Hume's rigid ritual treatment — the chanting monks, the measured straightforward speech, balanced pose and rhythmic action — as much as to the grandeur of his locale and the genius of his lighting.

At Detroit, and also at the St. Louis Artists' Guild Theater under the direction of Irving Pichel, the Isaac

[1] In practice at Northampton this proved inevitably noisy; and the sound of the jerked curtains was covered by a loud rush of wind commencing just before, as though the Angel swooped out of Heaven to his poised discovery with open wings.

of the St. Paul production, intimacy compelled a more subdued style, scene, and lighting. The dimly lit stage suggested a chancel, the rich but quiet altar and archaic altar screen were glamorous rather than striking, and the beam of light accompanying God's Voice could be neither perpendicular (from lack of stage height) nor blindingly intense. Instead of being revealed resplendent, the Angel grew and glimmered out of blue shadow. The armor worn, and personally handmade, by the St. Paul Angel was obtained for the Detroit production, and smaller metal wings were fabricated by the Arts and Crafts Society. Isaac was played by a girl at Detroit, by a young boy at St. Louis. Mr. Hume retained his chorus of monks and added more organ music and an unseen female choir, as well as two acolytes to draw and close the curtain and hold occasional properties. With these churchly paraphernalia the play probably became almost as religious as dramatic; at least such was the effect of a similar production of the Chester Christmas plays seen by the editor at the New York Greenwich Village Theater. Whether an intimate performance of *Abraham and Isaac* would not gain more than it lost by a more naïve, day-lighted and purely histrionic presentation is a question the present editor hopes some day to answer by personal experiment.

It may be noted that in the original plays, following the Bible, there are many references, here necessarily altered, to a hill and briers, etc., and this suggests that an out-of-door performance in natural surroundings, with little Isaac toiling up the hill with his faggots, and skipping down it at the end, and confessing:

"I was never so afraid before
As I have been at yon hill;
But by my faith, father, I swear
I will never more come there
But it be against my will!"

would be most enlightening. Such a production is believed to have been made by the Mountain Players in California.

Rather than a repetition of Mr. Hume's well-proven style, therefore, the editor recommends to other Little Theater directors a free, original experimentation with this flexible, malleable old play that has such profound, intense appeal and such indestructible dramatic power. The text has been put together with care for that end, to include everything of value in the two Miracle plays, but it may be shortened at any artist's pleasure; and the stage directions, based necessarily on Mr. Hume's well-worked-out "business," need be taken only as a guide to the actor and a hint to the producer, not as a regimen for every production. At Christmas or at any other time, and in all manner of ways, *Abraham and Isaac* merits earnest and artistic stage presentation.

STAGING

SPEAKING primarily of his Detroit production, Mr. Hume says of the staging:

"The director's first aim should be so to unite the stage and the auditorium, and so to order the performance, that the spectators become a part of the complete pageant, — participants in a solemn and significant religious service. The full effectiveness of the production depends very largely on the director's ability to create and maintain this atmosphere. The auditorium should have a central aisle from the rear to the stage, with a flight of easy steps to the stage floor. The scene should represent the space immediately before the altar of a chapel, — in larger theaters, the high altar of a cathedral; and the lighting should be subdued and mellow, as if before falling on the scene it had slowly drifted through high, old-rose windows. In contrast, the Voice of God must be accompanied by a strong arc spot-light or small search-light (softened slightly through a pale amber or straw medium) which is elevated so that when its shaft strikes the stage, a little below the altar, it gives the illusion of being projected from an infinite height, blinding in its force and brilliancy. It should seem unnatural, if not supernatural, — violently invading the stillness of the normal lighting."

Mr. Pichel in St. Louis draped his stage in black,

with feigned pillars of folded hangings. The right side had a recess behind these, in which stood a boy-choir holding long lighted tapers; and the upper half of the left side (the two meeting in a corner, up-center) held the altar and its all-important backing, raised several steps and bright with colors and candlelight. Mr. Hume at Detroit placed his rather plain altar in the middle of an "illuminated" (as is said of medieval manuscripts) back wall, three steps up between two solid silhouette pilasters, and hung only the sides in black. The religious tints and glows of his decorations, with the singing and the organ, impressed on the "congregation" just the reverent mood he sought. Of the angelic culmination of this he writes:

"Behind the altar, incorporated into the scene, is a large reredos or altar-screen with three panels — the central one concealing an aperture high and wide enough to show and in good proportions frame the Angel with his immense, upstanding wings. The panels of this altar-screen may formally be figured with saints, seraphs, and church symbols, done in rich colors with a generous use of gold. The sliding central panel — in Little Theaters, the surest and simplest device for the Angel's apparition — is mounted on a pair of ball-bearing sheaves (like a barn door) which run on wooden tracks fixed to the frame that supports the whole altar-screen, and with a little care its operation can be made absolutely noiseless. Behind or in the altar, at the foot of the panel, a small automobile-light or baby spot-light is focused so that its beam strikes the Angel's face and then is buried above his head so high that the lighting of his background is not affected. Supplemental light is added

from a stereopticon placed inside and just above the proscenium and fitted with a slide so narrowed that its ray falls only on the figure of the Angel. Both of these lights and also those behind the screen which uniformly flood with a clear blue the Angel's concave background — ideally a plaster cyclorama, but if the theater is not equipped therewith, a mere semicircle of unbleached cotton drape — must be "on resistance" that they may be dimmed and brightened; for the Angel is revealed by swift degrees like an ethereal being poised in a touchless, fathomless blue void. This effect can be approximated by experimentation: it is obvious that no definite method can be laid down except for a given set of stage-conditions."

It is only needful to add that for the ensuing version, including as it does the sacrifice of the lamb in Isaac's stead and the boy's gleeful playing with the sheep in quivering, delighted reaction from his intense ordeal, provision must be made at the Angel's feet for the limp, fleecy form to lie where Abraham can readily lift it forth and lay it ceremonially along the altar top while incense rises before the already fading heavenly messenger. Beyond this, Mr. Hume's directions apply, so far as his style is to be followed, to this version as fully as to his own; and any different style means rather omissions than fundamental changes.

CHARACTERS

The Voice of God. It is imperative that the actor playing this unseen rôle have an unusually powerful, rich and resonant voice and a perfect diction. If happily the speaker has besides an unusual quality in his tone and can achieve the impression of remoteness and austerity without becoming too hard and metallic, so much the better.

Abraham. A tall, commanding actor, with a sympathetic, rich, sonorous, and highly plastic voice and a pronounced feeling for the dignity of his part and the rhythm of his lines. He should be dressed in full robes strong in color and rich in quality, similar both to those of an ancient Jewish high priest and of a medieval Catholic bishop, but imparting in the final impression a distinctly Oriental atmosphere; and he should, as the world's archetypal patriarch, be expertly made up with long white hair, full flowing white moustache and beard, blending together, and shaggy white eyebrows. In his broad sash he carries several pieces of rich cloth wherewith to bandage Isaac's eyes and bind his limbs.

Isaac. In a small theater, perhaps this part — a rarely histrionic and exacting one — is best entrusted to a girl who with slim, boyish figure and young, sexless voice can unbrokenly give the impression of a lad of twelve; but of course a boy,

gentle and appealing, with a musical voice and perfect diction, is a preferable player for it when one can be found. He should be dressed in a simple, scant tunic of plain cream-colored material with a mottled hide thrown over it to break its starkness, and sandals with long thongs of rawhide that are wound round the lower leg and tied above the calf.

The Angel. A very tall, well-built young man, with an intellectual and spiritual face (but in no sense effeminate) and a clear musical voice of higher register than the voices of any of the other characters save Isaac, he is dressed in full, shining armor, with immense well-modeled wings, and a flaming sword in his hand. With his hair of Titian gold, square-cut and slightly curled, falling halfway to the shoulder, and a very slender gold halo, he looks at last — brilliant, gleaming, ethereal — very much like Doré's Saint Michael.

The Expositor. Middle-aged, smooth-shaven, with perhaps the better sort of ministerial voice and utterance, he is dressed as a doctor of the period (fifteenth-sixteenth century) in black and scarlet, wearing a hat, like Abraham, even in church, and bearing a book, and altogether suggesting some figure out of Holbein.

Two Acolytes. Comely boys of nine or ten years, dressed in the conventional scarlet and lace of the Roman Catholic Church. One carries a censer and the other a sword. This sword should be rich, slightly curved, and though of indefinite historical design implying, like Abraham's and Isaac's costumes, an Oriental origin.

Monks. As nearly uniform in height as possible, gowned in the conventional black, each carrying a long and large white candle, and all good singers familiar with the Gregorian chants; their number depends merely on the size of the stage.

A Choir of Women, near the organ, off-stage

THE CAST OF THE PLAY AT ITS NORTHAMPTON PRODUCTION

The Voice of God.....Albert Parker Fitch
Abraham.....Samuel A. Eliot, Jr.
Isaac.....Anna W. Hosford
The Angel.....Robert E. S. Olmsted
The Expositor.....William Allan Neilson

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

As the house lights are first dimmed, there begins an organ prelude, played off-stage and apparently far away. The two Acolytes slowly open the curtain (if it parts instead of rising), each boy walking from the center to the side of the proscenium arch as if actually drawing the curtain back. The house lights, already less bright than the rather dim stage lighting, continue to fade. The two Acolytes turn and walk diagonally up-stage, and not forgetting the proper genuflections as they cross in front of the altar, pass out of sight at either side. The chanting of the monks becomes now faintly audible, and the organ music dies away. This chanting, truly Gregorian and sung in unison, grows gradually louder until the procession actually enters the auditorium. The house lights go quite out.

The monks, walking in pairs and carrying their candles lighted, move slowly down the aisle and up the steps on to the stage, forming in two equal groups on either side. Arrived in position, they cease singing and extinguish their candles without any ado: and from this point on they remain as inconspicuous as possible, — immovable figures, if you like, embodying God's omniscience, God's pity, and God's will.

Following the monks at a little interval comes the Expositor. He in turn is followed at another interval by the two Acolytes, one carrying the sword and the other the censer. Behind them again comes Abraham, and at a

little distance, Isaac, bearing on his shoulders a bundle of faggots. Abraham should reach the foot of the steps at the stage front just as the monks cease singing. The Expositor goes up after the monks on to the stage and takes a position at one side, while the Acolytes stop at the foot of the steps and separate to allow Abraham to go between them. As Abraham walks up the steps and on to the stage, all the participants there kneel. Isaac stops at the bottom step between the kneeling Acolytes, bowed low, his back to the audience. As Abraham reaches the center of the stage there is complete silence: he kneels himself, facing the altar up-stage, and deeply, solemnly speaks.

ABRAHAM

Father of Heaven omnipotent,
With all my heart to thee I call!
Thou hast given me both land and rent,
And my livelihood thou hast me sent:
I thank thee high-ly evermore of all!

First of the earth thou madest Adam
And Eve also to be his wife.
All other creatures of them two cam';
And now thou hast grant' to me, Abraham,
Here in this land to lead my life.

And in my age thou hast granted me this:
(*raising his head and though without turning, indicating Isaac below him*)
That this young child with me shall run.
I love nothing so much, y-wis,[1]

[1] *Y-wis* (German *gewiss*) means surely, or indeed.

Except thine own self, dear Father of bliss,
As Isaac here, my own sweet son.

Therefore, Father of Heaven, I thee pray
For his health and also for his grace.
Now, Lord, keep him both night and day
That never dis-easë nor no fray
Come to my child in no place!

(*He rises and turns to Isaac*)
Now come on, Isaac, my own sweet child:
Go we home and take our rest.

ISAAC (*standing up at the foot of the steps and starting to ascend*)
Abraham, mine own father so mild,
To follow you I am full prest [1]
Both early and late.

ABRAHAM (*helping him up onto the stage and leading him toward the altar tenderly*)
Come on, sweet child I love the best
Of all the children that ever I begate!

[*Then, about midway up-stage, they pause, startled, and turn facing each other, Abraham right and Isaac left: for the lights rapidly dim out. There is an instant of total darkness, in which every one kneels down except Abraham, who instead lifts his face for the spot-light fully to strike. The blinder is very slowly opened,*[2] *and as the narrow streak of white radiance, almost as intense in the darkness as lightning, widens, the Voice of God is heard softly, permeatingly, perhaps accompanied by a long-drawn single note or chord*

[1] French *prêt*, ready.
[2] Or, the beam is slowly brightened.

on the organ. The audience must feel *rather than* hear *God thinking, and know that Abraham hears nothing.*

THE VOICE OF GOD

Abraham's heart now will I assay,
Whether that he be steadfast or no, —
Whether he loveth better his child or me;
And all men shall take example this day
How my commandments they shall fol-low.
(*There is a moment's silence; then the full shaft of the spot-light smites blindingly upon the figure of Abraham, and the Voice of God peals out*)
Abraham! my servant Abraham!

ABRAHAM (*his voice trembling a little with excitement*)

Lo, Lord! All ready here I am!

THE VOICE OF GOD (*very loud and clear, separating the syllables*)

Take Isa-ac, thy son by name,
That thou lovest the best of all
(*a wee mite jealously*),
And in sacrifice offer him to me
Upon that stone there beside thee.
(*Abraham gasps and shudders*) —
Abraham, I will that so it be,
For aught that may befall!

ABRAHAM (*fearfully, yet venturing to question the command*)

Ah, Lord God, I am sore a-fear'd
To grudge anything against your will, —
Yet, my dear Lord, my conscience is strongly stir'd
That now I must the child go kill!
(*To himself, thinking rapidly*)

I love my child as my life, —
But yet I love my God much more,
For though my heart would make any strife
Yet will I not spare for child nor wife
But do'n after my Lordë's lore.
(*Opening his arms wide and raising them, the palms of the hands up, toward the source of the Light, in resignation; with great dignity of pathos*)
O Lord, to thee is mine intent
Ever to be obedient!
That son that thou to me hast sent
Offer I will to thee,
To fulfill thy commandëment
With hearty will as I am kent: [1]
High God! Lord omnipotent!
Thy bidding done shall be.
Though my heart be heavily set
To see the blood of my own dear son,
Yet for all this
(*dashing away the moisture in his eyes*)
I will not let [2]
But Isaac my son I will go fet'
And do it as fast as ever we can!

[*The blinder closes on the spot-light, quickly but not startlingly, and while the normal lighting is being restored and the kneeling figures on each side softly rise, Abraham gropes in the darkness and cries out pitifully* —

[1] *I.e.*, taught. All the final t's in this passage should be pronounced sharply.

[2] *Hold back.* Professor Child translates "Yet will I not withhold my debt."

ABRAHAM

Now, Isaac, my own son dear!
Where art thou, child? Speak to me!

ISAAC (*kneeling still, awe-struck, but unaware of what has passed*)

My father, sweet father, I am here,
And make my prayers to the Trinity.

ABRAHAM (*more calmly, with a mellow, pitiful sweetness*)

Make thee ready, my dear darling,
For we must do a little thing.
This wood do on thy back it bring
And go we our way.

ISAAC (*rising, the faggots still on his back*)

Go we, dear father, as fast as I may!
To follow you I am full fain,
Although I be slender.

ABRAHAM (*aside*)

Ah, Lord, my heart breaketh in twain, —
This childë's wordës they be so tender!
(*He steps down-stage, away from Isaac, addressing the acolytes at the foot of the steps*)
A sword, and fire, that I will take,
(*The acolytes move up the steps, put sword and censer into Abraham's hands, and going to right and left stand near the proscenium sides, facing center*)
For sacrifice me behooves to make:
God's bidding will I not forsake,
But ever obedient be!
[*Struggling to be resolute, he stands there, down-stage, his back to Isaac.*

ISAAC

Father, I am all rea-dy
To do your bidding most meek-ly:

To bear this wood full be-an am I [1]
As you commanded me.

ABRAHAM (*turning up to him, almost sobbing*)
Oh, Isaac! my darling dear!
My blessing now I give thee here.
Take up this faggot with good cheer
And on thy back it bring;
And (*showing the censer but concealing the sword*)
fire with us I will take.

ISAAC (*cheerfully*)
Your bidding will I not forsake.
(*lovingly*)
Father, I will never slake [2]
To fulfill your bid-ding!

ABRAHAM (*aside*)
Ah, Lord of Heaven, my hands I wring!
This child's words make my heart to ache!
(*Turning up to Isaac and pointing at the altar behind him*)
Lay down thy faggot, my own son dear.

ISAAC (*with some surprise, laying down the faggots at the altar*)
Already, father? Lo, it is here.
(*As he rises, rid of his burden, he starts at the sight of his father's face; sympathetically*)
But why make you such heavy cheer?
Are you anything adread?
[*Abraham moves up center to the altar, Isaac backing away from him, left, with a premonition of his purpose. Abraham sets down the censer near the faggots at the altar's foot; and then, still holding the sword, slightly*

[1] be-an = obedient.
[2] Slacken.

opening his arms, and raising his face to the source of the divine light, he speaks with strong emotion.

ABRAHAM

Oh, my heart will break in three!
(*To Isaac, noting his timid retreat*)
To hear thy words I have pi-ty!
(*Upward, with iron restraint*)
As thou wilt, Lord, so must it be!
By thee I will be led!

ISAAC (*off to the left, pointing timidly to the faggots*)

Lo, my dear father, where it is.
(*Hesitantly approaching, as Abraham mournfully regards him*)
To cheer you al-way I draw me near.
Given to your hands I stand right here.
But, father — I marvel sore of this:
Why that you make this heavy cheer!
And also, dear father, evermore dread I
(*with a sudden outcry*)
Where is your quick beast that ye should kill?
Fire and wood both have we rea-dy,
But quick beast have we none to spill!
(*Looking about, almost whispering*)
Father, if it be your will,
Where is the beast that we shall kill?
(*Abraham shudders, the sword flickering with his spasm, and Isaac catches sight of it. Quivering*)
Father, my heart beginneth to quake
To see that sharp sword that you shake.

ABRAHAM (*sobbing aloud*)

Ah, Isaac, my son, — peace! peace!
For y-wis thou breakest my heart in three!

ISAAC (*bolder, close to him, beseeching*)
Tell me, my dear father, ere I cease, —
Bear ye your sword drawn for me?!
(*Suddenly clinging fast to his father*)
Father, tell me, ere I go [1]
Whether I shall be harmed or no!
ABRAHAM (*lifting his face to the absent light of God*)
Ah, dear God, that me is woe!
Isaac, thou breakest my heart in sunder!
ISAAC (*clinging still, frightened and gently pleading*)
Father, tell me what you will do.
Why have you your sword drawn so,
And bear it naked with this throe (*feeling Abraham trembling*)?
Thereof I have great wonder . . .
(*Abraham looks down into his face, and turns away, unable to meet his eyes*)
Now, truly, father, somewhat ye think,[2]
That ye mourn thus more and more!
ABRAHAM (*aside, but not softly*)
Ah, Lord of Heaven, thy grace let sink,
For my heart was never half so sore!
(*He thrusts the sword into the nearest hand, on his right, and turning to Isaac, crushing him to him, he cries out brokenly*)
Ah! Isaac! Isaac! I must thee kill!
ISAAC (*struck cold, pulling away from his father a little and speaking pitifully as though his deepest trust had been shattered*)
Alas, father! Is that your will?
Your owën childë forto spill

[1] *I.e.*, let go.
[2] *I.e.*, plan, intend.

Upon this altar's brink?[1]
(*He takes Abraham's hand and pleads with him childishly*)
If I have trespass'd against you aught,
With a yard[2] you may make me full mild,
And with your sharp sword kill me not;
For y-wis, father, I am but a child!
(*Then partly to himself, with all his heart*)
Would God my mother were here with me!
She would kneel down for me on both her knee,
Praying you, father, if it may be,
Forto save my life!
But sithen my mother is not here
I pray you, father — change your cheer
And do it not with your knife!

ABRAHAM (*sorely wrung, holding the boy's head in both his hands*)
Oh, comely creature! but I thee kill,
I grieve my God, and that full ill!
I may not work against his will,
But ever obedient be.
O Isaac, son! To thee I say
God hath commanded me to-day
Sacrifice, — this is no nay, —
To make of thy bo-dy!

ISAAC (*overwhelmed: with simplest piteousness*)
And is it God's will I shall be slain?

ABRAHAM
He commanded me, son, cer-tain,
To make my sacrifice with thy blood —

[1] Doubly pathetic if he shows that he still believes God and God's altar may be his protection.
[2] *I.e.*, a stick.

(*Isaac stifles a cry*)
Yea, truly, Isaac, my son so good!
And therefore my hands I wring.
[*He lets Isaac's head go, and breaks down, weeping.*
ISAAC (*bravely*)
Marry, father, God forbid
But you do your offering!
I shall never grudge, loud nor still,
Against my Lordë's will —
Though He might 'a' sent me a better speed!
(*He takes his father's arm, in a weak essay to comfort him*)
At home other children you shall find
That you should love well by course of kind;
And, father, once I be dead,
I shall be soon out of your mind!
Therefore, do our Lord's bid-ding,
And when I am dead, then pray for me.
(*At a sudden thought, seizing his father*)
But, good father, tell ye my mother no-thing!
(*Hurriedly*)
Say that I am in another country dwelling!
ABRAHAM (*almost wildly, through his weeping*)
O Isaac, Isaac, blessëd must thou be!
Almost my wit I lose for thee!
My heart beginneth strongly to rise
To see the blood of thy blessëd bo-dy!
ISAAC
Father, sin' it may be no otherwise
Let it pass lightly and over go!
(*Gently caressing his father, he kneels down, facing front*)
But, father, ere I go to my death

Kneeling on my knees two [1]
I pray you with your hand bless me!

ABRAHAM (*his hand over the boy's bowed head in the Roman Catholic manner of blessing*)
Now, Isaac, with all my breath
(*struggling against his sobs*)
My blessing, and (*strongly*) God's too, I give thee!
(*He breaks down; and reaching, blindly, pulls Isaac to his feet*)
Isaac, Isaac, son! — stand up, y-wis,
Thy fair sweet face that I may kiss!
[*He kisses Isaac passionately, and holds him close.*

ISAAC (*softly, his eyes fixed beyond his father on the sword ready held, right*)
Father, I pray you, hide mine een
That I see not your sword so keen.
Your stroke, father, I would not see'n
That my flesh shall defile!

ABRAHAM (*nearly speechless*)
Son, thy words make me to weep full sore!
Now, my dear son Isaac, speak no more!

ISAAC (*drawing back from him in piteous surprise*)
Ah, my own dear father, wherefore? wherefore?
We shall speak here together but a while.
(*Self-contained, less childishly, — though still fearfully pathetic*)
And sithen that I must needs be dead,
Yet, my dear father, to you I pray:
Smite but few strokes at my head,
And make an end as soon as you may!

ABRAHAM (*aghast*)
Thy meek words, child, make me afray!

[1] Pronounced not as usual but as spelled.

(*Weakly*)
Kiss me again, my own sweet child!
In all this world is none so mild!

ISAAC
Oh, dear father, do away, do away
Your making so much moan!
(*He suffers himself to be kissed again, and then as Abraham hangs on him, gently puts him off*)
Now truly, father, this talk-ing
Doth but make long tarrying;
I pray you, come and make end-ing
And let me hence be gone!

ABRAHAM (*calmed somewhat by his tone, straightening up*)
Come hither, my child, that art so sweet;
Thou must be bound, both hands and feet.

ISAAC (*standing quiet as his father loosely and blindly binds him*)
Ah, father, we must no more meet,
By aught that I may see.
But yet my God I may not grieve,
So do on your list for me hardily!
(*He instinctively snatches away one hand, but then with a smile lets Abraham take it again*)
Upon the purpose that you have set you
For sooth, father, I will not let you.[1]
Do with me as you will —
God-ë's commandment to fulfill!
(*Very softly and tenderly*)
My fair sweet father, I give you leave.
(*Then, twisting directly round to his father, very earnestly*)

[1] *I.e.*, hold you back.

But father, I pray you evermore,
Tell ye my mother no-thing!
If she wist it, she would weep full sore
I come no more under her wing!
(*Under his breath to himself, as he submits to the last bonds*)
Farewell, mother so sweet!
We two be like no more to meet.
Farewell for ever and aye!
And, father, I cry *you* mer-cy
Of all that I have trespass'd to thee:
Forgiven, father, that it may be,
Until Doom's day.
(*Quickly to himself with a sharp in-take of breath*)
God of Heaven be with me!

ABRAHAM (*his task done, crushing the bound boy to him once more*)
Oh, my dear son, let be thy moans!
In all thy life thou griev'd'st me never once!
Blessëd be thou, body and bones, —
(*his voice breaking*)
And I — "forgive" — thee here!
[(*Releasing him*)
Now, my dear son, here shalt thou lie.
(*He places Isaac just before and a little to the left of the altar, and with one of the candles — which he moves back against the panel — lights the censer and puts it on the bundle of faggots, center, at the altar's base*)
Unto my work now must I hie.
(*Pausing*)
I had as lief myself to die
As thou, my darling dear!

And mine own body forto offer!

ISAAC (*absolutely resigned*)

Ah, mercy, father, mourn ye no more!
Your weepings make my heart sore
As my own death that I shall suffer!] [1]
(*Kneeling where he is, facing toward the audience, and speaking quickly, — his hands bound but face raised in dread and pleading*)
Father, if you be to me kind,
About my head a kerchief bind,
And let me lightly out of your mind,
And soon that I were sped!

ABRAHAM (*after binding his eyes featly*)

Farewell, my sweet son of grace!
[*He keeps Isaac's head in his hands, moveless and nerveless.*

ISAAC (*with a piteous little outcry: now that he cannot see, he expects a deathblow at any moment*)

Ah, father, father, turn downward my face!
For of your sharp sword I am ever adread!
(*Then, considering, faintly*)
And let me take my clothes away,
For shedding blood on them this day
That I must be dead.
[*Abraham releases his hands again, and while Isaac blindly strips off his upper garment, he murmurs to himself in anguish.*

ABRAHAM

To do'n this deed I am full sor-ry!

[1] The eight lines bracketed, with accompanying business, were omitted at Northampton. The incense burned throughout the play, and Isaac took the right position relative to the altar and the Angel when he was first bound.

But, Lord, thine hest will I not withstand!

[*He receives back the sword from the slow, fateful hand, right, in which he had left it.*

ISAAC (*upright on his knees, throwing back his head*)

Ah, Father of Heaven, to thee I cry:
Lord, receive me into thy hand!

[*He bows his head, and waits.*

ABRAHAM (*gripping the sword, looking at him*)

Lo, now is the time come, cer-tain,
That my sword in his neck shall bite!
Ah, Lord, my heart riseth there-again!
I may not find it in me to smite!

(*Moving down right and lifting his arms once more toward the Voice of God*)

O Lord, I would fain work thy will;
But this young innocent lieth so still,
Full loth were I him to kill!
O Father of Heaven, what shall I do?

[*Pause.*

ISAAC (*tremulously*)

Ah, mercy, father, why tarry ye so?
I pray you, short me of my woe!
Smite off my head and let me go!
Now I would to God the stroke were through!

ABRAHAM (*passionately*)

Ah, son, my heart will break in three
To hear thee speak such words to me!

ISAAC (*trembling violently with the strain*)

Father, I pray you with my last breath,
Let me not *look* thus after my death!

ABRAHAM (*desperately*)

Heart, if thou wouldst burst in three,
Thou shalt never master me!

(*His agony flaming up towards the Voice of God*)
Jesu, on me thou have pi-ty,
That I have most in mind!

ISAAC (*breathless, but with great relief*)
Almighty God in majesty,
My soul I *offer* unto thee!
Lord, to it be kind!

[*During this last, the lights have been gradually dimmed, so that as Isaac finishes his prayer there is just a glimpse of the sword gleaming in its swing over Abraham's head, then an instant of black darkness in which the panel of the altar screen rolls back, and then the lights on the Angel and his background are evenly and quickly brightened so that he seems to grow out of the darkness, — the only visible presence on the stage.*

At the instant of darkness, a small choir of female voices begins singing softly, swelling as the lights come up on the Angel to the most brilliant pitch at the moment when the lights reach full, and dying down, as the Angel begins to speak, to a soft musical background for his lines.[1]

THE ANGEL
Abraham, my servant dear!

ABRAHAM (*becoming visible, in profile, — turned towards the Angel with his lowered sword still grasped in his hand, — and speaking very softly, in all-expectant awe*)
Lo, Lord, I am all ready here.

ANGEL
Lay not thy sword in no man-ner

[1] "An excellent piece of music for this is Gretcheninoff's Cherubimic Hymn arranged to be sung *alla capella* by a small female choir." — Sam Hume.

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On Isaac, thy dear dar-ling.
(*Abraham impulsively puts the sword from him on to the altar*)
I am an Angel, thou may'st see,
That from Heaven is sent to thee.
Our Lord an hundred times thanketh thee
That thou doest his bid-ding,
And sparest neither for fear nor fray
To do'n thy son to death this day:
Isaac, to thee full dear, to slay
He knoweth thy will.
Therefore he hath sent me to say —
Since thou dread'st him above all things aye —
(*Pointing with his sword to the limp, dead lamb stretched at his feet*)
A fair ram here I bring thee, in fay,
That thou mayest kill.
(*Abraham's arms go up in a sudden dumb outbreak of joy*)
Now, Abraham, amend thy mood,
For Isaac, here, thy son so good,
This day shall not shed his blood
But God shall him bless!

ABRAHAM (*going up quickly and lifting out the lamb*)
Ah, Lord of Heaven and King of bliss,
Thy bidding shall be done, y-wis!
(*Lifting the lamb high*)
Sacrifice here sent me is,
(*with a great though not loud cry of joy*)
And all, Lord, through thy grace!
(*With not too prolonged ceremony he proceeds to sacrifice the lamb on the altar at the Angel's feet; then steps back*)

Now, Lord God of Heaven in Trinity,
Almighty God omnipotent,
My offering I make in the worship of thee,
And with this quick beast I thee present.

[*In answer the Voice of God thrills down warmly, without any accompanying light.*

THE VOICE OF GOD

Abraham, Abraham, well may thou speed,
And Isaac, thy young son, thee by,
For truly, Abraham, by this deed
Ye keep my commandments every one;
And for ye dread me as God alone,
My blessing I give, wheresoever ye hie!

[*During this speech the light on the Angel, already veiled by the ascending smoke from the censer as if from the sacrifice, gradually fades out. The last light reflected from his armor shows Abraham kneeling down in awe of the Voice and the return of total darkness. The singing ceases: the panel is rolled back into place: and the stage lights are then gradually made normal again.*

ABRAHAM (*slowly extending both arms toward the panel where the Angel had appeared*)

Ah, Lord, I thank thee of thy great grace!
(*Rising and turning toward the still little figure of his bowed, kneeling boy*)
Rise up, my dear son! Show thy face!

ISAAC (*in a high wail, suddenly betraying the fearful strain he has suffered and his entire ignorance, blindfolded as he is, of his deliverance*)

Ah! Mercy, father! Why smite ye not yet?
Ah, smite on, father, once with your knife!

ABRAHAM (*aghast, laying gentlest hands on his trembling shoulders*)

Peace, my sweet son, and take no threat (*as Isaac writhes away from his touch*),
For our Lord of Heaven hath grant' thy life
By His Angel noo,[1]
(*taking the bandage from his eyes*)
That thou shalt not die this day, son, — tru-ly!
[*Isaac stares wildly up at him unbelieving, and as Abraham bends down pitifully, reassuring him, he clings to him close.*

ISAAC

Ah, father, full glad then were I —
(*rising, his eyes fixed on Abraham's face*)
Y-wis, father, — I say y-wis —
If this tale were true!
But will not God be wroth at this?

ABRAHAM (*holding him fast in his arms and kissing him*)

Nay, nay, hardly, my sweet son! —
For joy thy mouth now will I kiss
An hundred times! — He hath sent us down
Yon lamb to die in his worship alone.
I have presented him here in thy stead.
(*Softly, with a last caress — in an effort to bring the boy back easily to normal life*)
Let us fetch him home now, child, sith he is dead.

ISAAC (*springing away to the altar, across his father whom he leaves at the left, and prancing about in a reaction which is ecstasy*)

Oh, father, I will hent him by the head
And bring him with me fast anon!
(*Caressing the lamb's head*)

[1] *I.e.*, now.

Ah, sheep, sheep, blessëd may't thou be
That ever thou wert sent down hither
That thou should'st die this day for me
In the worship of the Holy Trinity!
Now come fast and go we together, —
(*With a real little shout*) Home hie!
Though thou be never so gentle and good,
Yet had I liever thou sheddest thy blood,
Y-wis, sheep, than I!
(*Stooping, at the right of the altar, he draws the lamb's fore-legs over his shoulders and pulls it off, the sword clattering from it to the floor. Abraham, left, picks up the sword. Isaac, peering round, winces*)
But, father, as I stoop down low
You will not kill me with your sword, I trow?

ABRAHAM

Nay, hardly, sweet son! Have thou no
Dread: my mourning is past!

ISAAC (*still peering warily from under the sheep*)

Yea. But I *would* that sword were further me *fro*,
For it makes me full ill aghast!

ABRAHAM (*giving the sword to the nearest hand — to the left, this time*)

Why, dear-worthy son, wert thou frighted so?[1]
(*Going to him and lifting the lamb from his back, laying it over his own left shoulder, and giving Isaac another fatherly but less effusive caress*)
Hardily, child, tell me thy lore!

ISAAC (*close to his father's right*)

Yea, father, by my faith,
I was never so afraid before!
But I thank our Lord every jot

[1] Professor Child's wording.

That my wit so well servëd me
Forto dread God more than my death!

ABRAHAM

Yea, son, full glad and blithe may we be
Against God's will that we grudgëd not!

ISAAC (*looking all around one last time fearfully*)

But father, by my faith I swear
I will never more come here
But it be against my will!

ABRAHAM (*leading him down-stage, comfortingly*)

Yea, now, come on with me, my own sweet son.
Homeward fast now let us gon!

ISAAC (*with a glad sigh*)

Ah, father, I had never so good a will
To gon home and speak with my dear mother!

ABRAHAM (*at the head of the steps, his arm about his boy, with happy reverence*)

Ah, Lord of Heaven, I thank thee
That now I may lead home with me
Isaac, my young son so free,
The gentlest child above all other!

ISAAC (*fervently*)

And, Lord God, *my* thanks to thee I give,
For with all my heart I am glad I shall live
And kiss once my dear mother!

ABRAHAM (*showing him that they are passing through the proscenium arch*)

Now go we forth, my blessëd son.

ISAAC

I grant, father; and *let* us gon!
By my troth, were I once home, then
I should never go out like this again! [1]

[1] Professor Child's wording.

(*He steps forward to the head of the steps, spreads out his arms and looks up*)
I pray God give us grace evermore anew,[1]
(*and then taking in the whole audience*)
And all thou that we be holding [2] to!

[*Father and son then move down the steps, up the aisle, and away, — Abraham leaning slightly on the boy who walks with his head up and a glow on his face.*

The Expositor comes gravely to center and addresses the audience.

EXPOSITOR

Lo, sovereigns and sirs, now have we showëd
This solemn story to great and small.
It is good learning, to learnëd and lewëd
And the wisest of us all.
This deed you saw done here in this place,
In example of Jesu done it was,
That, forto win mankindë's grace,
Was sacrificed on the rood.
By Abraham understand ye may
The Father of Heaven, and by Isaac good
Jesu, that was obedient aye,
His father's will to work alway,
Till death confound he could:
For this story showeth you here
How we should keep, to our pow-er,
God-ë's commandments in no grudging mood.

Trow ye, sirs, an God sent to you
And commanded you your child to slay'n,
By your troth, is there any of you
That either would grudge or strive there-again?

[1] Professor Child's wording. [2] *I.e.*, beholden.

How think ye now, sirs, there-by?
I trow there be three or four or mo;[1]
And these women that weep so sorrowfully
When that their children die them fro
As nature will, and kind,[2] —
It is but folly, I may well avow,
To grudge against God or to grieve you,
For ye shall never see him mischief'd, well I know,
By land or water! Have this in mind.

And grumble not against our Lord God,
In wealth or woe, whatever he send,
Though ye be never so hard bestod,[3]
For when he will, he may it amend.
(*He kneels, and the monks murmur the following words in unison with him*)
Such obedience grant us, O Lord,
As this story hath show'd us here-beforne,
Ever to thy most holy word,
That we may please God both even and morn!
Now Jesu that wear'd the crown of thorn
Bring us all to heaven bliss!
Finis.

[*He rises, and the monks begin a Gloria in Excelsis. He descends the steps and they follow him away through the audience, singing still, that the chant may not die out until some moments after the last pair has left the auditorium. Then the Acolytes move to the curtain and seem to draw it together, as at the beginning, from either side; and thus the Play ends.*

[1] More.
[2] The noun, as in *man-kind*, not the adjective
[3] Bested.

THE LOATHED LOVER

Adapted from *The Changeling*
of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

INTRODUCTION

THOMAS MIDDLETON, the principal author of "The Changeling," was probably born about 1570, a native Londoner. In 1602 he is mentioned as part author of a lost play, *Caesar's Fall*, and in 1603 he wrote a prologue and epilogue to a Court revival of an old play. He was, therefore, in nearly the same position as Shakespeare about 1590, learning by odd revision and collaboration the arduous profession of play-writing. His career begins at just the time when, mostly under Ben Jonson's influence, the theater was turning to realism, to exaggerated "humorous" comedies of London, replete with satire, with obscenity, and with fantastic, tricky turns of plot. He learned this — necessarily ephemeral — kind of catering to temporary taste in the companionship of Thomas Dekker; but one of the very best plays of this species, *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, 1607, is undoubtedly Middleton's own, and there are seven or eight others of the school mainly or wholly attributed to him.

London's liking for itself thus distorted and burlesqued upon the stage seems to have died out before 1610, and Middleton then turned to the purer springs of poetry dammed within him, which, as Swinburne demonstrates, had yet limpidly seeped into some of his earliest pieces. In romantic plays on Fletcher's model, he proved himself, whenever his pressing needs

and the theater's haste permitted, a true member of the poetic galaxy of Jacobean playwrights. *The Widow*, *A Fair Quarrel*, and *The Mayor of Queenborough* are striking examples of his fecundity, facility, and theatric grace; and in the latter two there also appears, unmistakably, the "harsher and hoarser" (as Swinburne calls it) voice of William Rowley, thereafter his most regular collaborator. Our play, *The Changeling*, falls near the end of this period, in 1622.

In 1620 Middleton was appointed City Chronologer, and thence composed in part, and even wholly, many masques and pageants. And in 1624 came the climax of his life, when his dexterous and delicate, brilliant and (as Swinburne dares to say) Aristophanic satire, *A Game at Chess*, was literally a nine-days wonder, getting the players in that time the unheard-of sum of fifteen hundred pounds. Covertly, ingeniously, and trenchantly aimed against the Spanish intrigues of the day, it met at its ninth performance the formal protest of the Spanish Ambassador: all plays were interdicted for a term, and Middleton, according to one account, briefly imprisoned. Not long afterwards he died, in 1627.

Strangely little is known of his personality. As with so many classic dramatists, by his work alone can he be judged, — and it is sorrily uneven work. Neither Shakespearian creation nor Jonsonian invention frequently distinguish it. Negligence and hurry mar too much that might — by vividness and freshness, ease and vigor, more feminine (in Fletcher's vein) than virile like Webster, but passionate and well calculated for the stage — have shone, where only flashes now remain. Want or weariness, natural in

the ill-paid and overdriven profession of the time, must excuse many an inconsistency or ugliness; and half-finished plays were inevitably common in those days of brief runs and scantier rehearsal hours. Thus, *The Witch*, linked by accident with *Macbeth*, is effluent with poetry but puerile in plot; *Women Beware Women* is eloquent but infamous, inventive but preposterous. In very few of his plays do construction, characterization, and the poetic arts harmoniously combine, and the practice of collaboration was in his case emphatically infelicitous, resulting in incongruities past explication and dreary or disgusting interims betwixt his finest scenes. This last is most marked even in *The Changeling*.

For *The Changeling* takes its name from the silly underplot contributed by Rowley. William Rowley was an actor first, a "play doctor" second, and only in the third place an author. Of his life we know nothing but his marriage in 1637, and the fact that he collaborated with Dekker, Heywood, Fletcher, Webster, Massinger, and Ford, as well as Middleton. He was not "literary," but a very practical stage-worker, adept at intriguing plots and stunning situations. We have four plays, published in the 1630's, of which he is reputed the sole author; but he was not a poet, and hardly a comedian. His rough genius shows power in tragic complications, but only a coarse or inane stupidity in comedy. And nearly half of *The Changeling* is prosy, prolix "comedy" of feigned insanity, banal beyond words. It is only good fortune that it can all be so neatly left out, and permit the tragic scenes to run smooth and mighty over the consequent gaps.

Rowley wrote the first and the last[1] scenes of the tragic main plot also. To him then must be credited both the clear, strong introduction and the splendidly effective close of De Flores's career, — De Flores, whom Leigh Hunt denominated "a character at once so tragical, probable, and poetical as to surpass anything I know of in the drama of domestic life." But Middleton was the creator of De Flores's fuller self-unfolding, between; and whether for some particular actor or out of his own spirit, he made of the thwarted and detested gentleman an immortal dramatic character. The ravenous and pitiless passion of cynical desire, so horribly human, so fearfully and wonderfully natural,[2] of De Flores, can nowhere be outdone except in Shakespeare. Rowley's reckless meters (as an actor he knew the unimportance of bad scansion in live speech) and curt, ungainly dialogue befit him as perfectly as Middleton's lucid, candid, innocent verse reveals Beatrice-Joanna, his victim, by her own abhorrence of him blind to his profounder mastery of her. The coherence, logical development of character, and cumulative stage technique of this short tragedy, ascribable to both its authors alike, are of the highest order: it is a recognized masterpiece of the English Drama, — yet is here for the first time freed of its dross and offered to the modern theater.

Both producer and player must be always mindful that this play, like all its tragic contemporaries, moves in an artificially taut-strained atmosphere: every

[1] *I.e.*, the part after our long footnote on page 174.

[2] Paraphrased from Swinburne's essay upon Middleton in The Mermaid Series.

emotion is heightened so that the simplest speeches are nervous, the mildest action is tense, and the climaxes of the drama are violent beyond anything but sheerest melodrama on the modern stage. To keep from being melodramatic, the artist must be serious, measured, careful of rhythm in speech and movement, and must stress every opportunity for *beauty,* pictorial or poetic; besides, of course, interpreting the characters, whose reality and motivated growth are the intrinsic distinction of the tragedy, with the utmost detail, consistency, and loving joy in *acting.* To keep the play from being dull, "high-brow," classical and slow — as such advice alone, of course, would make it — the player should on the other hand work up to an expressive pitch of feeling before beginning, and act with a fiery speed, passion and conviction that will magnetically warm and grip the audience, as intense and intimate emotion always must. Combine, if possible, the artificial neurotic stress of the Jacobean dramatic convention — due, probably, as much to the virtuosity of the actors as to the sensation-hungry audience — with the innate excitability and tightly restrained violence of the play's Spanish personages and circumstances. For the scene is laid in Alicante in southeastern Spain, and romantic exaggeration is both intended and legitimate.

The costumes, it need scarcely be added, should be appropriate to the locality and the period — but well-chosen Shakespearian costumes will not be out of place: such as would be used in the Sicily of *A Winter's Tale* or even of *Much Ado;* especially if a touch of Spanish outward austerity be given them, and dignity be prized above grace or picturesqueness.

STAGING

AS far back on the stage as possible, there is a *sky*. A solid, concave plaster sky, diffusive of varying lights reflected into it, such as exists at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York and the Arts and Crafts Theater in Detroit, is infinitely the best; for it must be a sky now sunnily blue, now stormily gray-green with thickening clouds.

Some distance in front of it is the *big window*, Moorish-arched, through which it is seen. This window is exactly in the middle of the picture, and its dimensions must be accorded to the picture's — *i.e.*, the proscenium's — size. Its design is important, artistically, too, for it is the sole "break" in the monotony of a dark green wall stretching quite athwart the stage.

Against this wall, as part of it, solidly jutting out and quite unrailed, there ascends a *stair*, some three feet wide, from a trap opening at left-center to a landing platform slightly larger than the width of the window and three feet or so under the window sill at center: thence mounting on up to a doorway in a side wall, right.

The sides of the stage are "masked" by two "wings" which are the withdrawn, much-pleated curtains that, when closed, form the backgrounds of the two "draped" front scenes. One pair, three feet in front of the stair, is light of texture and fantastically col-

ored — by stenciling, painting, or sewing on a blue-green ground thick, sprawling patterns of pink, lilac, magenta, maroon, and purple lilies, nodding and morbid. This is a purely atmospheric decoration, interpretative of the play, not attempting any Spanish motif or suggestion. Behind these curtains is set a high four-poster bed, dark of frame, very white of coverlid, and red of canopy and "fixings," snugly enclosed in a recess or alcove of strongly violet-colored flats. A low, wide, dark chair, as historically correct as possible, is the only other piece of furniture in the play and is used before these curtains.

Farther down-stage — perhaps only four feet or so behind the main curtain — hang heavier, fuller draperies of black, with a bold red pattern, Spanish in feeling, which at the same time reinforce the stronger, saner, heavier passions of those scenes they back. The costumes of Alsemero and Tomaso chime with these hangings, as that of De Flores chimes with the loathly lighter draperies behind.

Finally, there is a church door, before which passes the first scene. It should be set as far up-stage as possible: a light-absorbing "tab" of black velvet (or corduroy) suspended close before the sky may "back" a lofty Spanish church portal, elevated three or four steps and recessed between converging, pilastered side walls. The scenery should not be too gaily colored, but Mediterranean, vivid, — enhancing the quick emotions in play before it. The costumes of Jasperino and Diaphanta and both the flowery dresses of Beatrice-Joanna accord with its sunny brilliance.

CHARACTERS

Alsemero, a mature youth, traveling to seek his fortune. A noble adventurer, like many of the time, Spanish or English; a high-bred gentleman, self-possessed, virile in love or anger, — capable of great emotion and equivalent expression.

Jasperino, his friend. A slim lad, youthfully devoted to him.

Two Servants. One is young, sturdy, ordinary; and the other old, bent, wrinkled, with scanty yellow teeth and a high, odd voice.

Vermandero, Governor of the Castle at Alicant. A tall, noble old Don, with long, silver mane, thick, white mustaches, and bristly gray brows over deep, gleaming eyes. His voice is deep and accustomed to command.

De Flores, a gentleman attendant upon him. He is small, with a misshapen head hung forward on stooped shoulders. His eyes are uncannily bright and piercing, but their glance is usually sidelong and suspicious, under pendulous and granulated lids. His mouth, once sensitive, now in its hardened, cruel lines suggests a dog. A birthmark disfigures the right side of his jaw. His face is covered with pimples, blackheads, and blotches, yet worsened by a scant and sorry beard. His hands also are afflicted with eczema. His mien is snakily servile,

till attainment of his will imparts a distorted nobility that by contrast exaggerates his repulsiveness. Manifestly a loathsome creature, he is yet of great magnetic personal moment His is the stellar part, — for a great tragic character-actor.

ANTONIO } Other gentlemen attending on Ver-
FRANCISCUS } mandero, — undistinguished.

A SERVANT to Vermandero, — in plainer dress.

BEATRICE-JOANNA, Vermandero's daughter. A tall, haughty, but distinctly *young* girl, beautiful, with plentiful hair and winsome grace, but unobservant, headstrong, and unscrupulous. Her character alters, grows, becomes tragic in its degradation, as the play proceeds.

DIAPHANTA, her waiting-woman. A very young girl, buxom, cheerful, and natural.

ALONZO DE PIRACQUO, betrothed to Beatrice-Joanna. A very young, graceful Spanish gallant, slightly effeminate, — aristocratic but light-weight.

TOMASO DE PIRACQUO, his elder brother. A stalwart Don, in black, with a sullen, stormy face and immense powers of passionate speech.

THE LOATHED LOVER

Scene 1: Before the Church

The Curtain rises. The dark Church Door is seen deep back on the stage, in normal daylight. Alsemero comes out of it.

ALSEMERO (*coming down slowly — not dreamy but energetically* in love)

'Twas in the temple where I first beheld her!
And now again the same! What omen yet
Follows on that? None, but imaginary.
Why should my hopes, or fate, be timorous?
The place is holy; so is my intent:
I love her beauties to the holy purpose.
(*down-stage, right center; determinedly*)
The church hath first begun our interview
And that's the place must join us into one!

[*Enter Jasperino, left.*

JASPERINO

Oh, sir, are you here? Come, the wind's fair with you:
You're like to have a swift and pleasant passage.

ALSEMERO (*disagreeably surprised, looking up at the imaginary vane on the steeple straight over his head and lifting his left hand to test the wind*)

Sure, you're deceived, friend: it is contrary,
In my best judgment.

JASPERINO (*astonished*)

What, — for Malta?

If you could buy a gale amongst the witches
They could not serve you such a lucky penn'orth
As comes o' God's name!

ALSEMERO (*dogmatically*)

Even now, I observed
The temple's vane to turn full in my face.
I know it is against me.

JASPERINO

Against you?
Then you know not where you are!

ALSEMERO (*shamefacedly, half to himself*)

Not well, indeed!

JASPERINO (*half-hearing; with concern*)

Are you not well, sir?

ALSEMERO (*candidly, yet with a hint of lover's ambiguity*)

Yes, Jasperino, —
Unless there be some hidden malady
Within me, that I understand not.

JASPERINO

And *that* I
Begin to doubt, sir, for I never knew your
Inclination to travel at a pause!
At home you were wont to call your servants up
And *help* to trap your horses for the speed;
At sea I have seen you weigh the anchor with 'em,
Hoist sails for fear to lose the foremost breath,
Be in continual prayers for fair winds, —
And have you changed your orisons?

ALSEMERO

No, friend:
I keep the same church, same devotion.

[*He slowly walks up to the church door again, as in meditation.*

JASPERINO (*staying down left center, to his back*)
Lover I'm sure you're none. The stoic was
Found in you long ago. Your mother nor
Best friends, who have set snares of beauty, ay,
And choice ones too, could never trap you that way.
What might be the cause?

ALSEMERO (*turning at the church steps, impatiently*)
Lord, how violent
Thou art! I was but meditating of
Somewhat I heard within the temple.

JASPERINO
Is this
Violence? 'Tis but idleness, compared
With *your* haste, yesterday! — Look, your servants!
[*Enter Two Servants to Alsemero, one young, one old, right.*

YOUNG SERVANT (*up-stage*)
The seamen call; shall we board your trunks?

ALSEMERO
No, not to-day.

JASPERINO
'Tis the critical day, it seems.

OLD SERVANT (*down right, nodding sagely and showing a few yellow teeth, with meaning*)
We must not to sea to-day; this smoke will bring
forth fire (*winking at Jasperino*).

ALSEMERO (*up center, dominant*)
Keep all on shore; I do not know the end,
Which I needs must do, of an affair in hand
Ere I can go to sea.

YOUNG SERVANT (*doffing his cap and turning down right*)
Well, your pleasure.

OLD SERVANT (*to the Young*)

Let him e'en take his *leisure*, too. We are safer on land. (*Exeunt Servants, right*)

[*Enter, deep in the Church Door, Beatrice-Joanna, attended by Diaphanta and the Servant to Vermandero. She stands at the top of the steps, smiling, love-lit, quite boldly, at Alsemero, who at her coming faced around and dropped a little down right, then bowed low to her, and hesitantly mounted the steps.*

Diaphanta comes down on her left, balancing Alsemero.

Alsemero, his left foot advanced on a higher step, with courtly grace kisses the hand that Beatrice-Joanna extends him.

Jasperino in amazement drops down left, commenting aside.

JASPERINO

How now? The laws of the Medes are changed, sure! Salute a woman? He kisses too! Wonderful! Where learnt he this? And does it perfectly, too! In my conscience he ne'er rehearsed it before. — Nay, (*as Alsemero hands Beatrice-Joanna down the steps*) go on! This will be stranger and better news at Valencia than if he had ransomed half Greece from the Turk!

[*He stands down left, watching the slow and more and more loving approach and converse of the pair. Presently he catches the eye of Diaphanta, mischievously listening, and begins to flirt with her.*

The Servant waits in the rear, right of steps.

Beatrice-Joanna stops, down right center, and speaks.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

You are a scholar, sir?

ALSEMERO A weak one, lady.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Which of the sciences is this love you speak of?

ALSEMERO

From your tongue, I take it to be music.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

You're skilful in it—can sing at first sight!

ALSEMERO

And I have showed you all my skill at once:
I want more words to express me further,
And must be forced to repetition:
I love you dearly.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Be better advisëd, sir!
Our eyes are sentinels unto our judgments
And should give certain judgment what they see,
But they are rash sometimes, and tell us wonders
Of common things, which when our judgments find
They can then check the eyes and call them blind.

ALSEMERO

But I am further, lady. Yesterday was
Mine eyes' employment, and hither now
They brought my judgment, where both agreed!
Both houses then consenting, 'tis agreed:
Only there wants the confirmation
By the hand royal; that is your part, lady.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

There's one above *me*, sir; (*disengages herself, comes down center, puts her hands over her eyes*) —
Oh, for five days past
To be recalled! Sure mine eyes were mistaken!
(*Front*) *This* was the man was meant me! That he should come

So near his time, and miss it!

[*She stands center, imperious but pouting, with Alsemero looking at her yearnfully.*

JASPERINO (*aside*)

We might have come by the carriers from Valencia,
I see, and saved all our sea-provision: we are at
farthest, sure.[1] Methinks *I* should do something too.
I mean to be a venturer in this voyage!
Yonder's another vessel, I'll board *her*.
If she be lawful prize, down goes her topsail!

[*He accosts Diaphanta, and presently has an arm around her.*

Enter De Flores, right. Alsemero does not notice him. He comes in stooped, as though with his tail between his legs, anticipating insult, but doggedly intent on Beatrice-Joanna and oblivious of Alsemero, before whom he crosses to her. She feels his presence: one can perceive her loathing rise before he speaks: she turns a gleam-eyed, hating face upon him.

DE FLORES

Lady, your father —

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Is in health, I hope!

DE FLORES (*wincing but not taking his eyes off her; persistently*)

Your eye shall instantly instruct you, lady:
He's coming hitherward.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*with lashing tongue*)

What needed then
Your duteous preface? I had rather he had
Come unexpected! (*He cowers away; she bears down upon him*) You must stale a

[1] *I.e.*, we'll travel no farther.

Good presence with unnecessary blabbing;
And how *welcome* for your part *you* are, —
I'm sure you know!

[*She stands, looking daggers.*

DE FLORES (*has shrunk away to the right tormentor, and there mutters to himself with sidelong glances at her, picking his beard*) Will't never mend, this scorn?
One side nor other? Must I be enjoined
To follow still whilst she flies from me? Well,
Fates, do your worst! I'll please myself
With sight of her at all opportunities,
If but to spite her anger! I know she had
Rather see me dead than living; and yet
She knows no cause for't but a peevish will.

ALSEMERO (*has watched amazed — while Beatrice-Joanna recovered herself and turned her back on De Flores, returning to center resolved to ignore him and go on with her flirtation — and now approaches her dubiously*)
You seem'd displeasëd, lady, on the sudden.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*with charm*)
Your pardon, sir. 'Tis my infirmity.
Nor can I other reason render you
Than his or hers of some particular thing
They must abandon as a deadly poison
Which to a thousand other tastes were wholesome.
Such to mine eyes is *that* same fellow there:
The same that report speaks of the basilisk!

ALSEMERO
This is a frequent frailty in our nature.
There's scarce a man amongst a thousand found
But hath his imperfection: one distastes
The scent of roses, which to infinites

Most pleasing is and odoriferous;
One, oil, the enemy of poison;
Another, wine, the cheerer of the heart;
Indeed, this fault, if so it be, is general:
There's scarce a thing but is both loved and loathed.
Myself, I must confess, have the same frailty.

[*His words are idle, but the rapport between them grows.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA

And what might be your poison, sir? . . . I'm bold with you.

(*She lets him put his left arm round her waist. Diaphanta then permits Jasperino the same liberty. Alsemero's warmth mounts*)

ALSEMERO

What might be your desire, perhaps: a cherry.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*softly, womanly*)

I am no enemy to any creature
My memory has, but yonder gentleman.

ALSEMERO (*glancing at him*)

He does ill to tempt your sight, if he knew it!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*sensing his new protective tone, sharp in her words but ingratiating in* her *tone*)

He cannot be ignorant of that, sir!
I have not spared to tell him so! And I want [1]
To help myself, since he's a gentleman
In good respect with my father, and follows him.

ALSEMERO

He's out of his place then now!

[*They go from him, to upper left center, — as Diaphanta, resisting a kiss with a tiny squeal, runs*

[1] *I.e.*, "have no means."

down where they have been, Jasperino after her, — and talk there apart.

JASPERINO (*seizing Diaphanta*)

I'm a mad wag, wench!

DIAPHANTA (*in his arms, pertly*)

A little poppy, sir, were good, to cause you sleep.

JASPERINO

Poppy? I'll give thee a pop o' the lips for that first and begin there. (*After a brief struggle he succeeds, and releases her*) — Another time, I'll show thee all.

[*They see Vermandero coming, and withdraw, down left. Beatrice-Joanna and Alsemero see him too, and Beatrice-Joanna steps toward him, center.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA

My father, sir!

[*Enter Vermandero, right, attended by Antonio and Franciscus, who remain at the far right.*

VERMANDERO

Oh, Joanna, I came to meet thee.
Your devotion's ended?

BEATRICE-JOANNA

For this time, sir.

(*She goes away from him, down center. While he in a stately Spanish way scrutinizes Alsemero and is pleased to have his glance met by as proud and tense a one, Beatrice-Joanna speaks front, uneasily*)

I shall change my saint, I fear me: I find
A giddy turning in me! (*Then she recalls Alsemero and returns to his side, prettily facing her father*)
Sir, this while
I am beholden to this gentleman
Who left his own way to keep me company,
And in discourse I find him much desirous

To see your castle; he hath deserved it, sir,
If ye please to grant it?

VERMANDERO (*extending his hand cordially, which Alsemero takes*) With all my heart, sir.
Yet there's an article between: I must know
Your country. We use not to give survey
Of our chief strengths to strangers; our citadels
Are placed conspicuous to outward view
On promonts' tops, but within are our secrets.

ALSEMERO
A Valencian, sir.

VERMANDERO A Valencian?
That's native, sir. Of what name, I beseech you?

ALSEMERO
Alsemero, sir.

VERMANDERO
Alsemero? Not the son
Of John de Alsemero?

ALSEMERO
The same, sir.

VERMANDERO (*again giving him his hand and the left one on top of it: warmly*)
My best love bids you welcome!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*at Alsemero's left, gladly*)
He was wont
To call *me* so,[1] and then he speaks a most
Unfeignëd truth!

VERMANDERO
Oh, sir, I knew your father!
We two were in acquaintance long ago,
Before our chins were worth iulan down[2]

[1] *I.e.*, "his best love."
[2] *I.e.*, the "down" of puberty.

And so continued till the stamp of time
Had coined us into silver. (*Brushing back his silver mane with his left hand*) — Well, he's gone.
A good soldier went with him!

ALSEMERO (*sincerely, gripping his hand*)
You went together in that, sir!

VERMANDERO
No, by Saint Iago, but I came behind him!
(*Letting Alsemero's hand go, pleased, smiling, with a touch of Spanish boast*)
Yet I've done somewhat too!

ALSEMERO (*deeply, intently*)
I had revenged
Or followed him in fate, had not the late league
Prevented me.

VERMANDERO
Ay, ay. 'Twas time to breathe!
— Oh, Joanna, I should 'a' told thee news:
I saw Piracquo lately.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*turning away; aside*)
That's ill news!

VERMANDERO (*raising his voice, merrily*)
He's hot preparing for this day of triumph!
Thou must be a bride within this sevennight!

ALSEMERO
Ha!

[*Backing a bit up-stage, he looks at Beatrice-Joanna.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*going up to her father, as winsomely as she can*)
Nay, good sir, be not so violent!

[*She pleads with him softly, he smiling refusal; while Alsemero with stern, almost bitter stoicism skirts around her and comes down center.*

ALSEMERO (*through his teeth*)
I must now part, and never meet again
With any joy on earth! (*Vermandero puts Beatrice-Joanna aside, and steps down after Alsemero, who turns back to him*) Sir, your pardon:
My affairs call on me.
VERMANDERO (*heartily*)
How, sir? By no means!
Not changed so soon, I hope! You must see my castle:
I shall think myself unkindly usëd, else!
(*Alsemero backs away unwillingly, but Vermandero takes his hand*)
Come, come, let's on! I had good hope your stay
Had been a while with us in Alicant.
I might have bid you to my daughter's wedding.
ALSEMERO (*withdrawing his hand, and turning down stage*)
He means to feast me, and poisons me beforehand!
— I should be dearly glad to be there, sir,
Did my occasions suit as I could wish.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*coming down between them, standing wistful at her father's left*)
I shall be sorry if you be not there
When it is done, sir. (*From her subtle inflection he perceives she wishes* him *for* groom, *and weakens, looking at her; while she turns with entreaty to Vermandero*) But not so suddenly!
VERMANDERO (*holding Beatrice-Joanna's right hand in his left, enthusiastically*)
I tell you, sir, the gentleman's complete:
A courtier and a gallant, — enriched
With many fair and noble ornaments.

I would not change him for a son-in-law
For any he in Spain, the proudest he, —
And we have great ones, that you know!

ALSEMERO (*coldly, trying to edge away to the left*)
He's much
Bound to you, sir.

VERMANDERO
He *shall* be bound to me
As fast as *this* tie can hold him! (*glances at Beatrice-Joanna, squeezes her hand, and lets it go*)
I'll want my will else!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*sulkily moving behind him toward lower right, aside*)
I shall want mine if you do it!

VERMANDERO
But come; by the way I'll tell you more of him.

ALSEMERO (*to Jasperino on his left, quietly, as though settling affairs*)
How shall I dare to venture in his castle
When he discharges murderers [1] at the gate?
But I must on, for back I cannot go!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*checked at the sight of De Flores down right devouring her with a snake's gaze*)
Not this serpent gone yet?!
[*In her agitation one of her gloves drops; she stands charmed. De Flores peers at her fixedly.*

VERMANDERO (*turning, as Alsemero grimly accepts his invitation, stepping up towards him*)
Look, girl: thy glove's fallen. (*Aroused from the spell, she shivers and turns sharply up to the right exit*)
Stay, stay! De Flores, help a little.

[1] *I.e.*, cannon.

[*De Flores slowly stoops and lifts the glove, while Beatrice-Joanna watches him loathingly over her shoulder, fascinated. Above her, Antonio and Franciscus exeunt, preceding Vermandero and Alsemero; and after a momentary pause Jasperino, Diaphanta, and the Servant follow them off, leaving her behind with him. Rising, directly below her, his back to the audience, he tenders her the glove.*

DE FLORES

Here, lady.

[*His harsh voice breaks the charm: Beatrice-Joanna shudders and bursts out violently, and he recoils to center.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Mischief on thy officious forwardness!
Who bade *you* stoop? — They touch my hand no more!
(*She flings the other glove at him*)
There! For the other's sake I part with this!
Take 'em, and draw thine own skin off with 'em!
[*Exit, right.*

DE FLORES (*center, looking after her and fondling her glove*)

Here's favor come with a mischief now! I know
She had rather wear my pelt tanned in a pair
Of dancing-pumps than I should thrust my fingers
Into her sockets here. I know she hates me,
Yet cannot choose but love her! No matter.
(*He picks up the other glove*)
If but to vex her I will haunt her still;
Though I get nothing else, I'll have my will!
[*As he starts after them, right — Curtain.*

Scene 2: A Room in the Castle

The light curtains before the bed are closed (the bed need not be behind them at all in this scene), but the chair remains in front, left of center, facing down left. Left of it, cap in hand, facing right expectantly, stands Jasperino. Beatrice-Joanna enters, right, hastily, with a letter.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Oh, sir, I am ready now for that fair service
Which makes the name of friend sit glorious on you!
Good angels and this conduct be your guide!
(*Giving him the letter*)
Fitness of time and place is there set down, sir

JASPERINO (*bowing*)

The joy I shall return rewards my service.
[*Exit, left.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*standing, center, looking after him*)

How wise is Alsemero in his friend!
It is a sign he makes his choice with judgment.
Then I appear in nothing more approved
Than making choice of him! He that can choose
That bosom well who of his thoughts partakes,
Proves most discreet in every choice he makes.
(*Coming slowly down-stage*)
A true deserver like a diamond sparkles:
In darkness you may see him — that's in absence,
Which is the greatest darkness falls on love;
Yet he is *best* discernëd then
With *intellectual* eyesight! What's Piracquo
My father spends his breath for? and his blessing
Is only mine as I regard his name, —
Else, it goes from me and turns head against me,

Transformed into a curse! Some speedy way
Must be remember'd! He's so forward, too, —
So urgent that way! — scarce allows me breath
To *speak* to my *new* comforts!

[*She turns toward left again, moving thither and up slowly, thinking, and presently sitting in the chair. Enter De Flores, lower right.*

He comes in furtively and stops short at sight of her.

DE FLORES (*hoarsely, under his breath*)

Yonder's she! —
Whatever ails me, now o' late especially,
I can as well be hanged as refrain seeing her!
Some twenty times a day — nay, not so little —
Do I force errands, frame ways and excuses
To come into her sight! And I've small reason for it
And less encouragement, for she baits me still
Every time worse than other, does profess herself
The cruelest enemy to my face in town,
At no hand can abide the sight of me —
As if danger or ill luck hung in my looks!
(*Feeling his face gingerly*)
I must confess my face is bad enough,
But I know far worse that has better fortune, —
And not endured alone, but doted on!
(*He turns front, plucking his beard with his right hand, and his left twitching at his side with the intensity of his feelings*)
And yet such pick-haired faces, — chins like witches,
Here and there five hairs whispering in a corner
As if they grew in fear of one another,
Wrinkles like troughs where swine-deformity swills
The tears of perjury that lie there like wash

Fallen from the slimy and dishonest eye, —
Yet such a one plucks sweets without restraint
And has the grace of beauty to his sweet!
(*Letting his voice out deeper than he realizes*)
Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude,
I tumbled into the world a gentleman!
(*Beatrice-Joanna, hearing him, turns. The rustle turns him toward her also, wincing*)
She turns her blessëd eye upon me now,
And I'll endure all storms before I part with 't!

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Again?! (*She rises, half in fear but more in hatred*)
This ominous ill-faced fellow more disturbs me
Than all my other passions (*moving down left*).

DE FLORES (*with head bent and arms half raised as to defend himself, yet eyeing her and drawn to her, center*)
Now 't begins again!
I'll stand this storm of hail though the stones pelt me.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*stamping: he stops, right center*)
Thy business? What's thy business?

DE FLORES (*to himself, almost inaudibly, entreatingly*)
Soft and fair!
I cannot part so soon now!

BEATRICE-JOANNA

The villain's fixed!
Thou standing toad-pool —

DE FLORES

The shower falls amain now.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Who sent thee? What's thy errand? Leave my sight!

DE FLORES (*dogged*)
My lord your father charged me to deliver
A message to you.
BEATRICE-JOANNA
What, another since?
Do 't, and be hanged then! Let me be rid of thee!
DE FLORES (*to her, daringly, warmly*)
True service merits mercy.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*glaring him down*)
What's thy message?
DE FLORES (*humbly but insistently*)
Let beauty settle but in patience:
You shall hear all.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*shrinking: front, tapping with her left foot*) This dallying, trifling torment!
DE FLORES (*more self-assured, pressing his advantage*)
Señor Alonzo de Piracquo, lady, —
Sole brother to Tomaso de Piracquo —
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*almost frightened, snarling at him*)
Slave, when wilt make an end?
DE FLORES (*stopping, deeply*)
Too soon I shall!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*recovering her poise*)
What, all this while, of him?
DE FLORES (*uncertainly*)
The said Alonzo,
With the foresaid Tomaso, —
BEATRICE-JOANNA
Yet again?
DE FLORES
Is new-alighted —
BEATRICE-JOANNA
Vengeance strike the news!

Thou thing most loathed, what cause was there in this
To bring *thee* to my sight?!

DE FLORES (*cowed, wavering*)

My lord your father
Charged me to seek you out.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Is there no *other*
To send his errand by?

DE FLORES (*muttering*)

It seems 'tis *my* luck
To be i' the way still.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Get thee from me!!

DE FLORES (*turning right, whipped, as she turns left and goes up*) So!
(*Moving right, wryly*)
Why, am I not an ass to devise ways
Thus to be railed at? . . . I must see her still:
I shall have a mad qualm within this hour again!
(*At right tormentor*) What this may mean I know not. I'll despair the less
Because there's daily precedent of bad faces
Beloved beyond all reason: *these* foul chops
May come into favor one day 'mongst their fellows:
Wrangling has proved the mistress of good pastime:
As children cry themselves asleep, I ha' seen
Women have chid themselves a-bed to men!
[*With a crooked smile, he goes out, right.*
Beatrice-Joanna turns hesitantly to see if he's gone.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

I never see this fellow but I think

Of some harm towards me; danger's in my mind still:
I scarce leave trembling for an hour after!
The next good mood I find my father in,
I'll get him quite discarded. (*She hears steps coming, up right*) Oh, I was
Lost in this small disturbance, and forgot
Affliction's fiercer torrent that now comes
To bear down all my comforts!

[*Enter, right, Vermandero, holding Alonzo's left hand and Tomaso's right.*

VERMANDERO (*loud and lordly*)
You're both welcome,
But an especial one belongs to you, sir (*to Alonzo*),
To whose most noble name our love presents
The addition of a son — our *son* Alonzo!

ALONZO (*letting go his hand and bowing rather too courtlily*)
The treasury of honor cannot bring forth
A title I should more rejoice in, sir.

[*He stands down right looking at Beatrice-Joanna lovingly. She looks left front, not at him.*

VERMANDERO (*heartily*)
You have improved it well! (*He drops Tomaso's hand and goes toward Beatrice-Joanna*)
Daughter, prepare!
The day will steal upon thee suddenly!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*aside, bitterly*)
Howe'er, I will be sure to keep the night,
If it should come so near me!

[*Her father takes her up left and talks with her earnestly, while Tomaso, up right-center, watches her narrowly.*

TOMASO
Alonzo.
ALONZO (*lost in gazing on her*)
Brother?
TOMASO
In troth, I see small welcome in her eye.
ALONZO
Fie, you are too severe a censurer
Of love in all points! There's no bringing-on you!
If lovers should mark everything a fault,
Affection would be like an ill-set book
Whose faults might prove as big as half the volume!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*audible through earnestness*)
That's all I do entreat!
VERMANDERO (*indulgently*)
It is but reasonable;
I'll see what my son says to 't.— Son Alonzo,
Here is a motion made but to reprieve
A maidenhead three days longer; the request
Is not far out of reason, for indeed
The former time *is* pinching.
ALONZO (*bowing to Beatrice-Joanna, who remains cold*)
Though my joys
Be set back so much time as I could wish
They had been forward, yet, since *she* desires it,
The time is set as pleasing as before:
I find no gladness wanting.
VERMANDERO
May I ever
Meet it in that point still! (*He takes Beatrice-Joanna's right hand with his left, with a courtly gesture to them*) You're noble welcome, sirs!
[*He and Beatrice-Joanna exeunt above Tomaso,*

right, she with face downcast and averted. Tomaso smiles quizzically, and moves thoughtfully left.

TOMASO

So . . . (*He turns, left center, to Alonzo, who is looking up-stage after Beatrice-Joanna*)
Did you mark the dulness of her parting now (*in a tone that says "only a fool could have failed to!" but fraternally-kindly*)?

ALONZO (*facing him, sharply*)

What dulness? Thou art so exceptious still!

TOMASO (*glumly*)

Why, let it go, then. I am but a fool
To mark your harms so heedfully.

ALONZO (*challenging*)

Where's the oversight?

TOMASO (*impulsively, stepping toward him*)

Come, your faith's cozen'd in her, strongly cozen'd!
Unsettle your affection with all speed
Wisdom can bring it to; your peace is ruin'd else!
Think what a torment 'tis to marry one
Whose heart is leapt into another's bosom!
If ever pleasure she receive from thee,
It comes not in thy name or of thy gift:
She lies but with another in thine arms! —
He the half-father unto all thy children
In the conception! — if he '*get* 'em not!
How dangerous and shameful her restraint —
Is not to be thought on without sufferings!

ALONZO (*astonished*)

You speak as if she loved some other?!

TOMASO (*impatient*)

Do
You apprehend so slowly?!

ALONZO (*with youthful hauteur*)

Nay, an *that*
Be your fear only, I am safe enough!
Preserve your friendship and your counsel, brother,
For times of more distress. I should depart
An enemy — a dangerous, deadly one —
To any, but thyself, that should but think
She knew the *meaning* of inconstancy, —
Much less the use and practice! Yet we're friends.
Pray let no more be urged! I can endure
Much, till I meet an injury to *her;*
Then, I am not myself. . . . Farewell, sweet brother:
How much we are bound to Heaven to part lovingly!

[*And he goes off gallantly after Vermandero and Beatrice-Joanna, right.*

TOMASO (*surlily to himself*)

Why, here is love's tame madness! Thus a man
Quickly steals into his vexation!

[*He turns on his heel, irritated, and exit, left. The Heavy Curtains, front, are now drawn and closed. Enter, then, left, Diaphanta gaily but covertly ushering in Alsemero.*

DIAPHANTA

The place is in my charge: you have kept your hour,
And the reward of a just meeting bless you!
(*He gives her money*)
I hear my lady coming. (*Admiringly*) Complete gentleman,
I dare not be too busy with my praises:
They're dangerous things to deal with (*meaning they'll make her fall in love with him herself*)!

[*She runs off, right.*

ALSEMERO (*understanding, smiling gravely*)
This goes well.
These women are the ladies' cabinets:
Things of most precious trust are lock'd into 'em.
[*Enter Beatrice-Joanna, right, straight into his arms.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA
I have within mine eye all my desires.
Requests that holy prayers ascend heaven for
Come not more sweet to our necessities
Than thou unto my wishes!

ALSEMERO (*enfolding her*)
We're so like
In our expressions, that unless I borrow
The same words I shall never find their equals.
[*They kiss.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA
How happy were this meeting, this embrace,
If it were free from envy! This poor kiss, —
It has an enemy, a hateful one
That wishes poison to 't! How well were I now
If there were none such name known as Piracquo!
Nor no such tie as the command of parents!
(*Clinging to him*) I should be but too much blessëd!

ALSEMERO (*holding her, ardent and low*)
One good service
Would strike off both your fears, and I'll go near 't, too,
Since you are so distress'd. Remove the cause —
The command ceases: so there's two fears blown out
With one and the same blast.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*looking up close into his face, puzzled*) Pray, let me find you:
What might that service be, so strangely happy?

ALSEMERO

The honorablest piece about man, valor:
I'll send a challenge to Piracquo instantly!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*drawing back*)

How? Call you that *extinguishing* of fear,
When 'tis the only way to keep it flaming?
Are *you* not ventured in the action,
That's all my joys and comforts? Pray, no more, sir!
Say you prevailed: you're danger's and not mine then;
The law would claim you from me, or obscurity
Be made the grave to bury you alive!
I'm glad these thoughts come forth: Oh, keep not one
Of this condition, sir! Here was a course
Found to bring sorrow on her way to death:
The tears would ne'er ha' dried, till dust had choked 'em.
(*Looking in his face again, lovingly*)
Blood-guiltiness becomes a *fouler* visage!
(*She starts*)
And now I think on one! (*Front, to herself*) I was to blame
I ha' marred so good a market with my scorn;
'T had been done, questionless: the ugliest creature
Creation framed for *some* use!
[*The idea grows in her face.*

ALSEMERO

Lady, —

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*absorbed*)

Why, men of *art* make *much* of poison:
Keep one to expel another. Where was *my* art?

ALSEMERO

Lady, you hear not me.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*suddenly beaming upon him*)

I do especially, sir!
The present times are not so sure on our side
As those hereafter may be. We must use 'em then
As thrifty folks their wealth, sparingly now
Till the time opens.

ALSEMERO

You teach wisdom, lady.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Within there! Diaphanta!

[*Reënter Diaphanta, right.*

DIAPHANTA

Do you call, madam?

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Perfect your service, and conduct this gentleman
The private way you brought him.

DIAPHANTA (*admiring Alsemero, happily*)

I shall, madam.

ALSEMERO (*clasping both Beatrice-Joanna's hands, she looking her response*)

My love's as firm as love e'er built upon!

[*Diaphanta has crossed behind them to left. Alsemero turns and follows her. Beatrice-Joanna keeps after him. They disappear. Beatrice-Joanna, pausing a moment, goes too.*

Enter, cautiously, through the middle of the curtains, De Flores. He keeps half hidden and cranes to look after them, left.

DE FLORES

I've watched this meeting, and do wonder much
What shall become of t'other! I'm sure both

Cannot be served, unless she transgress! Haply
Then *I*'ll put in for one! for if a woman
Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
She spreads and mounts then like arithmetic:
One, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, —
Proves in time sutler to an army royal!
(*He sees Beatrice-Joanna returning, and withdraws all but his head*)
Now do I look to be most richly railed at,
Yet I *must* see her!

[*Reënter Beatrice-Joanna, left, not seeing De Flores.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Why, put case I loathed him
As much as youth and beauty hates a sepulchre, —
Must I needs show it? cannot I keep that secret,
And serve my turn upon him? — See, he's here!
De Flores (*in as gentle a tone as she can*)!

DE FLORES (*astounded, his whole face lighting up, but not opening the curtains; front*)

Ha, I shall run mad with joy!
She called me fairly by my name De Flores,
And neither rogue nor rascal!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*approaching him*)

What ha' you done
To your face o' late? You've met with some good physician.
You've pruned yourself, methinks: you were not wont
To look so amorously.[1]

DE FLORES (*rapturously hugging himself within the curtains*)

Not I;
'Tis the same physnomy, to a hair and pimple,

[1] *I.e.*, lovable.

Which she called scurvy scarce an hour ago!
How is this?

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Come hither. (*De Flores drops the curtains quivering*) Nearer, man!

DE FLORES (*stepping out to her, dreamily*)

I'm up to the chin in Heaven!

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Turn, let me see.
(*De Flores turns his full face to her, radiant*)
Faugh! (*and then, tactfully, to cover her involuntary exclamation*) 'Tis the heat o' the liver. I perceive't. (*Almost tenderly*) I thought it had been worse.

[*She timidly puts out a hand and touches his left cheek. He starts back from it.*

DE FLORES

Her fingers touched me!
(*She puts up her left hand and gently turns his face, enclosed in her palms, again to her*)
She smells all amber!!

BEATRICE-JOANNA

I'll make a water for you, shall cleanse this
Within a fortnight.

DE FLORES (*trembling*)

With your own hands, lady?

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*smiling into his eyes*)

Yes, mine own, sir; in a work of cure
I'll trust no other.

[*Then she lets him go and furtively rubs her hands clean in her dress. He shakes with passion.*

DE FLORES (*mastering himself, turning a step from her*) 'Tis half an act of pleasure
To hear her talk thus to me!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*not looking at him*)

When we're used
To a hard face, it is not so unpleasing;
It mends still in opinion, hourly mends:
I see it by experience.

DE FLORES (*aside*)

I was bless'd
To light upon this minute; I'll make use on't!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*as before*)

Hardness becomes the visage of a man well:
It argues service, resolution, manhood,
If cause were for employment.

DE FLORES (*turning back to her, fervently*)

'Twould be soon seen,
If e'er your ladyship had cause to use it;
I would but wish the honor of a service
So happy as that mounts to!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*softly*)

We shall try you (*turning away, but sighing seductively*), O my De Flores!

DE FLORES (*tense: front*)

How's that? she calls me hers!
Already *my* De Flores!
(*To her again, almost fawningly*) You were about
To sigh out something, madam?

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*to stir his sympathy*)

No, was I?
I forgot. — Oh! —
[*Sighing pathetically.*

DE FLORES (*nearer*)

There 'tis again, the very
Fellow on't (*close to her*)!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*shuddering a little back from him, but smiling bravely*) You are too quick, sir!

DE FLORES (*persistently*)

There's no excuse
For't now: I heard it twice, madam; that sigh
Would fain have utterance: take pity on't
And lend it a free word! 'Las, how it labors
For liberty! I hear the murmur yet
Beat at your bosom!

[*He is very close to her again; but she bears it.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*sighing*)

Would Creation —

DE FLORES (*encouragingly*) Ay!
Well said! That is it!

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Had form'd me man!

DE FLORES (*disappointed*)

Nay, that's
Not it.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*yearningly*)

Oh — 'tis the soul of freedom!
I should not then be forced to marry one
I hate beyond all depths! I should have power
Then to oppose my loathings, nay, remove 'em
Forever from my sight!

DE FLORES (*hotly*)

O blest occasion!
Without change to your sex you have your wishes:
Claim so much man in me!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*looking at him at last, with feigned surprise*) In thee, De Flores?
There is small cause for that.[1]

[1] *I.e.*, for your devotion to me.

DE FLORES (*passionately*)

Put it not from me!
It is a service that I kneel for to you!

[*He flings himself down on both knees, grasping her right hand. She shivers.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA

You are too violent to mean faithfully.
There's horror in my service, blood, and danger!
Can those be things to sue for?

DE FLORES (*beseeching*)

If you knew
How sweet it were to me to be employed
In any act of yours, you would say then
I failed, and used not reverence enough,
When I received the charge on't!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*rather astonished, uneasy, but pleased*) This is much, methinks.
(*Aside*) Belike his wants are greedy, and to such
Gold tastes like angels' food! — De Flores, rise!

DE FLORES (*wringing her hand*)

I'll have the work first!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*a little frightened, front as before*)

Possible his need
Is strong upon him. (*With her left hand she extracts a few coins from the purse at her belt*) There's to encourage thee (*tendering them*):
As thou art forward and thy service dangerous,
Thy reward shall be precious.

[*She tries to make him take them, let go her hand, free her from his presence; but he clings.*

DE FLORES (*his voice soaring*)

That I've thought on!
I have assured myself of that beforehand,

And *know* it will be *precious!*
(*To himself, intoxicated*) The thought ravishes!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*bursting out — partly for theatric effect, partly from impatience with his stay*)
Then take him to thy fury!

DE FLORES (*burningly*)
I thirst for him.

BEATRICE-JOANNA
Alonzo de Piracquo!

DE FLORES (*rising, dazed; deeply*)
His end's upon him;
He shall be seen no more.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*looking into his face and pressing the coins into his hand, warmly*) How lovely now
Dost thou appear to me! Never was man
Dearlier rewarded.[1]

DE FLORES (*deeply, thrillingly*)
I do think of that!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*apprehensive, at his strangeness*)
Be wondrous careful in the execution.

DE FLORES (*alive to things practical — but emotionally almost familiar*)
Why, are not both our lives upon the cast?

BEATRICE-JOANNA
Then I throw all my fears upon thy service.

DE FLORES
They ne'er shall rise to hurt you.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*already accepting the familiarity of the partner in crime, but still eager to be rid of him*)
When the deed's done,
I'll furnish thee with all things for thy flight.

[1] *I.e.*, than thou shalt be.

Thou may'st live bravely in another country.

DE FLORES (*turning away, moving right*)

Ay, ay;
We'll talk of that hereafter.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*to herself, front*)

I shall rid myself
Of two inveterate loathings at one time:
Piracquo, and *his dog-face!*
[*She goes off quickly, left.*

DE FLORES (*alone, enraptured*)

O my blood!
Methinks I feel her in mine arms already:
Her wanton fingers combing out this beard,
And, being pleasëd, praising this bad face!
Hunger and pleasure, — they'll commend sometimes
Slovenly dishes, and feed heartily on 'em;
Nay, which is stranger, refuse daintier for 'em; —
Some women are odd feeders! . . . I am too loud.
(*Looking right*)
Here comes the man goes supperless to bed
Yet shall not rise to-morrow to his dinner!
[*Enter Alonzo, right.*

ALONZO

De Flores.

DE FLORES (*servilely*)

My kind, honorable lord?

ALONZO (*carelessly*)

I am glad I ha' met with thee.

DE FLORES

Sir?

ALONZO

Thou canst show me
The full strength of the castle?

DE FLORES (*warmly*)

That I can, sir.

ALONZO

I much desire it.

DE FLORES

And if the ways and straits
Of some of the passages be not too tedious for you,
(*with veiled but chop-licking contempt for his effeminacy*)
I'll assure you, worth your time and sight, my lord.

ALONZO

Pooh, that shall be no hindrance.

DE FLORES

I'm your servant, then.
'Tis now near dinner-time; 'gainst your lordship's rising
I'll have the keys about me.

ALONZO (*turning, right, again*)

Thanks, kind De Flores.

[*Exit, right.*

DE FLORES (*alone, center, grinning avidly*)

He's safely thrust upon me beyond hopes!

[*Curtain.*

Scene 3: A Stair in the Castle Wall

It ascends from a trap, left center, to a platform, center, under a large Moorish-arched window, looking, as at a great height, upon a pleasant sky, — and thence on, up, off, right. There are hooks in the wall, at the right of the window. The front half of the stage is not lighted.

De Flores stands by the window, counting keys. Alonzo saunters down to him from right.

DE FLORES

Yes, here are all the keys; I was afraid, my lord,

I'd wanted for the postern: this is it.
I've all, I've all, my lord! This for the sconce.

ALONZO (*easily*)

'Tis a most spacious and impregnable fort!

DE FLORES

You will tell me more, my lord. This descent
Is somewhat narrow: we shall never pass
(*taking off his sword*)
Well with our weapons; they'll but trouble us.
[*And he hangs his up.*

ALONZO

Thou sayest true.
[*He too takes off his sword.*

DE FLORES

Pray, let me help your lordship.

ALONZO

'Tis done. Thanks, kind De Flores (*as De Flores takes it from him*).

DE FLORES (*hanging up the sword*)

Here are hooks, my lord,
To hang such things on purpose.
[*He gestures Alonzo to precede him down, hoping for his chance there and then!*

ALONZO

Lead, I'll follow thee.
[*And perforce De Flores leads the way down into the trap door, Alonzo follows, and they disappear.*

The top lights are dimmed. A wind is heard rising. The mood changes — grows ominous: the sky outside is overcast, and the light, coming now wholly through the window — diagonally from bunch-lights at each side — is greenish.

Pause, stillness, — then reënter De Flores up the stairs, Alonzo right behind him.

DE FLORES (*harshly breaking the hush*)

All this is nothing: you shall see anon
A place you little dream on (*significantly*).

ALONZO (*lightly*)

I am glad
I have this leisure; all your master's house
Imagine I have taken a gondola.

DE FLORES

All but myself, sir, — (*aside*) which makes up my safety!
— My lord, I'll place you at a casement here
Will show you the full strength of all the castle.
Look. Spend your eye a while upon *that* object.

ALONZO (*leaning at the window*)

Here's rich variety, De Flores.

DE FLORES (*feeling with his left hand for his sword*)

Yes, sir.

ALONZO

Goodly munition!

DE FLORES

Ay, there's ordnance, sir, —
No bastard metal, — will ring you a peal like bells
At great men's funerals (*significantly*). — Keep your eye straight, my lord:
Take special notice of that sconce before you: (*Alonzo leans farther out*)
There you may dwell a while.

[*He has grasped and softly now takes down the nearest sword, which is Alonzo's.*

ALONZO

I am upon 't.

DE FLORES (*drawing the sword like a flash and plunging it into his back*)
And so am I!

ALONZO (*reeling in and back, clutching the window-ledge to save himself from falling down the stair*)
De Flores! Oh, De Flores! Whose malice hast thou put on?

DE FLORES (*savagely*)
Do you question a work of secrecy? I must silence you!
[*Holding the sword in both hands, he stabs Alonzo repeatedly.*

ALONZO (*screaming and falling in a heap on the platform*) Oh, Oh, Oh!

DE FLORES (*continuing to stab till Alonzo is still*)
I must silence you!
(*Then he pauses, looks at the sword, sees it is not his, smiles at the irony, stands it under the window and puts on his own*)
So, here's an undertaking well accomplished!
(*Stooping, he straightens out Alonzo's corpse, its head hanging over the step, left, and ties the sword back on it; then steps below it, left*)
This vault serves to good use now. (*He starts to drag it down; the left arm drops over the edge of the stair*) Ha, what's that
Threw sparkles in my eye? (*He pulls the left hand up to him*) Oh, 'tis a diamond
He wears upon his finger! 'Twas well found:
(*Pulling at it*) This will approve the work.[1]
(*It sticks*) What, so fast on?
Not part in death? I'll take a speedy course, then:

[1] *I.e.*, prove it done.

Finger and all shall off! (*He draws a knife and cuts off the finger — really extracting a false one from the sleeve and putting it in his pocket, while Alonzo doubles his real one out of sight*) So; now I'll clear
The passages from all suspect or fear.
[*As he drags the body down the stair — Curtain.*

Scene 4: Same as Scene 2

The bed, in an alcove, is concealed behind the hangings. The chair is not on. Vermandero stands right center, Beatrice-Joanna on his left, and Alsemero and Jasperino on his right, hatless to him.

VERMANDERO
Valencia speaks so nobly of you, sir,
I wish I had a daughter now for you.

ALSEMERO
The fellow of this creature were a partner
For a king's love!

VERMANDERO
I had her fellow once, sir, —
But Heaven hath married *her* to joys eternal;
'Twere sin to wish her in this vale again.
— Come, sir, — your friend and you shall see the pleasures
Which my health chiefly joys in.

ALSEMERO
I hear
The beauty of this seat largely commended.

VERMANDERO (*politely, leading the way, above them, off right*) It falls much short of that.
[*They go out, leaving Beatrice-Joanna alone, center.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA
So, here's one step

Into my father's favor: time will fix him;
I've got him now the liberty of the house:
So wisdom by degrees works out her freedom;
And if that eye be darken'd that offends me —
I wait but that eclipse — this gentleman
Shall soon shine glorious in my father's liking
Through the refulgent virtue of my love!

[*Enter, left, De Flores, softly, treading on air.*

DE FLORES (*aside*)

My thoughts are at a banquet! For the deed,
I feel no weight in 't; 'tis but light and cheap
For the sweet recompense that I set down for 't!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*alertly, turning*)

De Flores!

DE FLORES

Lady?

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Thy looks promise cheerfully?

DE FLORES

All things are answerable, — time, circumstance,
Your wishes, and my service.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*with deep gladness*)

It is done, then?

DE FLORES

Piracquo is no more.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

My joys start at my eyes; our sweet'st delights
Are evermore born weeping.

DE FLORES

I've a token for you.

BEATRICE-JOANNA

For me?

DE FLORES

But it was sent somewhat unwillingly: '

I could not get the ring without the finger.

[*He produces the white-bled finger with its diamond ring.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Bless me, what hast thou done?

DE FLORES

Why, is that more
Than killing the whole man? I cut his heart-strings.
A greedy hand thrust in a dish at court
In a mistake hath had as much as *this!*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*looking at it horrified*)

'Tis the first token my father made me send him.

DE FLORES

And I have made him send it back again
For *his last* token. I was loth to leave it,
And I'm sure dead men have no use of jewels;
He was as loth to part with 't, for it stuck
As if the flesh and it were both one substance.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*with repugnance*)

At the stag's fall, the keeper has his fees:
'Tis soon applied: all dead men's fees are yours, sir.
I pray, bury the finger, but the stone
You may make use on shortly: the true value,
Take 't of my truth, is near three hundred ducats.

DE FLORES

'Twill hardly buy a capcase for one's conscience, though,
To keep it from the worm, — as fine as 'tis.
Well, being my fees, I'll take it (*pockets it again*).
Great men have taught me that, or else my merit
Would scorn the way on 't!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*quickly, conciliatory*)
It might justly, sir!
Why, thou mistake'st, De Flores! 'Tis not given
In state of recompense!
DE FLORES (*wryly*) No, I hope so, lady:
You should soon witness my contempt to 't then.
BEATRICE-JOANNA
Prithee, — thou look'st as if thou wert offended.
DE FLORES (*oddly*)
That were strange, lady; 'tis not possible
My service should draw such a cause from you.
Offended? Could you think so? That were much
For one of my performance, and so warm
Yet in my service.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*simply*)
'Twere misery in me to give you cause, sir.
DE FLORES (*nodding, still strangely*)
I know so much; it were so: misery
In her most sharp condition!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*trying to disregard his enigmatic carriage*) 'Tis resolved then.
(*Giving him a purse*) Look you, sir, here's three thousand golden florins.
I have not meanly thought upon thy merit.
DE FLORES (*exaggerating his genuine indignation*)
What! Salary? Now you move me!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*disconcerted*)
How, De Flores?
DE FLORES
Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows
To destroy things for wages? offer gold
For the life-blood of man? Is *anything*
Valued too precious for *my* recompense?

BEATRICE-JOANNA
I understand thee not.
DE FLORES
I could ha' hired
A journeyman in murder at this rate,
And mine own conscience might have slept at ease
And ha' had the work brought home.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*to herself, troubled*)
I'm in a labyrinth;
What will content him? I'd fain be rid of him.
(*Hesitantly*) I'll double the sum, sir.
DE FLORES
You take a course
To double my vexation, that's the good you do!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*to herself, frightened*)
Bless me, I'm now in worse plight than I was!
I know not what will please him.
(*Coaxing him*) For my fear's sake,
I prithee, make away with all speed possible!
And if thou be'st so modest not to name
The sum that will content thee, — paper blushes not:
Send thy demand in writing, it shall follow thee!
But, prithee, take thy flight!
DE FLORES (*looking her in the eye resolutely*)
You must fly too, then.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*startled*)
I?
DE FLORES
I'll not stir a foot else.
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*alarmed*)
What's your meaning?
DE FLORES (*cynically*)
Why, are not you *as* guilty? in, I'm sure,

As deep as I! and we should stick together.
(*As in friendly counsel*)
Come, your fears counsel you but ill: my absence
Would draw suspect upon you instantly:
There were no rescue for you!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*astounded, but so impressed by him that she believes*) He speaks home!

DE FLORES (*continuing in the same sensible, calm, friendly tone*)
Nor is it fit we two, engaged so jointly,
Should part, and live asunder.
[*He takes her hand familiarly, assuming a right to it which shocks her.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA How now, sir?
(*Fending him off*) This shows not well!

DE FLORES (*quite ignoring her attempt at dignity*)
What makes your lip so strange?
This must not be betwixt us.
[*He firmly removes the hand she has raised to protect herself.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*amazed*)
The man talks wildly!

DE FLORES
Come, kiss me with a zeal, now!
[*He lets go her hands, plainly expecting her to put them round his neck.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*backing away, scared*)
Heavens, I doubt him!

DE FLORES (*warningly*)
I will not stand so long to beg 'em, shortly!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*still quite uncomprehending; fearful only that he is mad, and in madness may betray them*)
Take heed, De Flores, of forgetfulness, —

'Twill soon betray us.

DE FLORES (*uncompromising*)

Take *you* heed first:
Faith, you're grown *much* forgetful! You're to blame in 't!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*to herself, still at a loss, but resentful*)

He's bold, and *I* am *blamed* for't!

DE FLORES (*insidiously*)

I have eased you
Of your trouble: think on it. *I* am in pain,
And must be eased by *you;* 'tis a charity:
Justice invites your blood to understand me!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*glimpsing at last his purpose*)

I dare not!

DE FLORES (*pressing her*)

Quickly!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*flaring up, outraged*)

Oh, I never shall!
Speak it yet further off, that I may lose
What has been spoken and no sound remain on 't!
I would not hear so much offense again
For such another deed!

DE FLORES (*not yielding a whit, hard*)

Soft, lady, soft!
The last is not yet paid for. Oh, this act
(*marveling at his own boldness and self-confidence*)
Has put me into spirit! (*To her, remindingly*) I was as greedy on 't
As the parched earth of moisture when the clouds weep.
Did you not mark, I wrought myself into it,
Nay, sued and kneeled for 't? Why was all that pains took?

You see I've thrown contempt upon your gold:
Not that I want it not — for I do, piteously —
In order I'll come unto it, and make use on 't, —
But 'twas not held so precious to begin with,
For I place wealth after the heels of pleasure!
(*Gripping her forearms*)
And were not I resolved in my belief
That thy virginity is perfect in thee,
I should but take my recompense with grudging,
As if I had but half my hopes I agreed for.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*writhing and crying out desperately*)
Why, 'tis *impossible* thou canst be so wicked,
Or shelter such a cunning cruelty,
To make his death the murderer of my honor!
(*De Flores, with a short, harsh laugh, releases her*)
Thy language is so bold and vicious,
I cannot see which way I can forgive it
With any modesty.

DE FLORES
Pish! You forget yourself!
A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*moving down-stage, wringing her hands*)
O misery of sin! Would I'd been bound
Perpetually unto my living hate
In that Piracquo, than to hear these words!
(*Whirling upon him in a frantic last essay to keep him subject*)
Think but upon the distance that creation
Set 'twixt thy blood and mine, and keep thee there!

DE FLORES (*quite uncowed, bearing down on her*)
Look but into your conscience, read me there:
'Tis a true book: You'll find me there *your equal!*

— Pish, fly not to your birth, but settle you
In what the act has made you! You're no more now.
You must forget your parentage to me.
You are the *deed's* creature: I challenge you
As peace and innocency has turned you out
And made you one with me!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*in loathing agonized*)

With thee, foul villain?!

DE FLORES

Yes, my fair murderess! Do you urge me,
(*close to her, manifestly her master, and changing suddenly from "you" to "thou," almost contemptuously*)
Though thou write'st maid, thou whore in thy affection?
— 'Twas changed from thy first love, and that's a kind
Of whoredom in the heart; and *he's* changed now
To bring thy *second* on, thy Alsemero, —
Whom by all sweets that ever darkness tasted
If I enjoy thee not, thou ne'er enjoyest!
(*Terribly*)
I'll blast the hopes and joys of marriage!
I'll confess all: my life I'll rate at nothing!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*wildly*)

De Flores!

DE FLORES (*less passionate; almost sympathetically*)

I shall rest from all love's plagues then.
I live in pain now. (*To her again, cravingly*) That shooting eye
Will burn my heart to cinders (*seizing her right hand in both his*)!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*imploring*)

Oh, sir, hear me!

DE FLORES (*immovable*)

She that in life and love refuses me, —
In death and shame my partner she shall be!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*madly, kneeling to him, her left hand at his chest while he still grips her right in both his and smiles possessively down on her*)

Stay! Hear me once for all! I make thee master
Of all the wealth I have in gold and jewels!
Let me go *poor* unto my bed with *honor*,
And I am rich in all things!

DE FLORES (*raising her by main strength*)

Let this silence thee:
The wealth of all Valencia shall not buy
My pleasure from me!
Can you weep Fate from its determined purpose?
So soon may you weep me!

[*He strides up and casts apart the curtains, revealing the bed: then stands there, lordly, waiting.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*front; hopelessly*)

Vengeance begins.
Murder — is followed by more sins.

[*She suddenly collapses, and falls as though her knees had given way, swaying and moaning in horror.*

DE FLORES (*coming down and raising her firmly but gently, and embracing her*)

Come, rise and shroud your blushes in my bosom!
(*She sobs, while he supports her*)
Silence is one of pleasure's best receipts.
(*She is still, and fearfully looks up into his face; he smiles, pitying*)
Thy peace is wrought forever in this yielding.

(*Her face drops on his neck, her breast heaves*)
'Las, how the turtle pants! — Thou'lt love anon
(*drawing her gradually up toward the bed*)
What thou so fear'st, and faint'st to venture on!

Quick Curtain

Scene 5

The heavy front curtains are closed, and at either side of their central opening Jasperino and Diaphanta are stooped and listening. They are horrified and astounded with what they hear behind.

Alsemero enters, right, to tell Jasperino news of Alonzo's disappearance, and Diaphanta at his coming darts out, left, in front of Jasperino.

ALSEMERO

Jasperino, I've news to tell thee, — strange news.

JASPERINO (*almost guiltily, stammering*)

I ha' some too, — I think, as strange as yours.
Would I might keep mine, so my faith and friendship
Might be kept in it! (*Alsemero is much surprised, and instantly gets suspicious*) All may prove nothing;
only (*apologetically*)
A friendly fear leapt from me, sir.

ALSEMERO (*gravely*)

No question,
It may prove nothing. Let's partake it, though.

JASPERINO (*swallowing*)

'Twas Diaphanta's chance — for to that wench
I proffer honest love, and she deserves it —
To leave me in a back part of the house,
A place we chose for private conference.
She was no sooner gone, but instantly

I heard your love's voice in the next room, —
And lending more attention found De Flores
Louder than she!

ALSEMERO (*astonished but relieved*)

De Flores? Thou art out now!

JASPERINO (*softly, curling his lips and looking down*)

You'll tell me more anon.

ALSEMERO

Still I'll prevent thee:
The very sight of him is poison to her.

JASPERINO (*nodding*)

That made me stagger too; but Diaphanta
At her return confirmed it.

ALSEMERO

Diaphanta!

JASPERINO

Then fell we both to listen, and words passed —
Like those that challenge interest in a woman.

ALSEMERO (*sternly*)

Peace! Quench thy zeal: 'tis dangerous to thy bosom!

JASPERINO (*shyly*)

Then *truth* is full of peril.

ALSEMERO

Such truths are.

(*Recoiling*)

Oh, were she the sole glory of the earth,
Had eyes that could shoot fire into kings' breasts,
And *touched*, she sleeps not here! (*Pulling from his breast a locket with her picture, and softening as he looks at it*) Tush, modesty's shrine
Is set in yonder forehead! The dove's not meeker!
She's abused, questionless.

(*Kissing the locket*) Chaste as the breath
Of Heaven, or morning's womb that brings the day forth!
(*Lowering it, he catches Jasperino's eye and slips it back into his bosom; more firmly*)
Yet I have time to be resolved hereof;
And prithee, do not weigh me by my passions.

JASPERINO (*very gravely, half drawing the curtains and indicating that he wishes Alsemero to look through secretly*) I never weighed friend so.

ALSEMERO (*with a friendly, confident arm across Jasperino's shoulder*) Done charitably!

[*Then, concealing himself in the curtains, his back to the audience, he glimpses what is going on behind them. A terrible shudder shakes him: he feels for his sword, but Jasperino holds the hilt; the curtains shiver. With a smothered gasp he reels back into view; Jasperino supports him. His face is horror-struck, and Jasperino shares the emotion and is almost speechless.*[1]

JASPERINO (*stammering, faintly*)
Your confidence is now — The prospect show'd
Enough, for deep suspicion —

ALSEMERO (*blackly, deeply, fatefully*)
The black mask:
Her despite to him, and so seeming-bottomless!

[1] This is the transition to the second part of the final scene. All this first part has of course been done in a hushed, oppressive atmosphere, with lowered voices and an imminence of horror just behind, which now reaches its climax and quickly plunges towards its catastrophe. Scene 5 should follow Scene 4 so swiftly that the audience not only knows *what* may be heard and seen behind the curtains, but retains the pitch of excitement at which Scene 4 must leave it and upon which the foregoing is piled.

JASPERINO (*quickly*)

Touch it home, then! 'Tis not a shallow probe
Can search this ulcer soundly. I fear you'll find it
Full of corruption! . . . 'Tis fit I leave you.

[*He goes away, eagerly, left.*

ALSEMERO (*right-center: very bitterly*)

Did my fate wait for this unhappy stroke
At my first sight of woman? — She is here.

[*Enter, shrinkingly, Beatrice-Joanna, through the Curtains.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*starting, frightened*)

Alsemero!

ALSEMERO (*somberly but keenly*)

How do you?

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*with forced lightness*)

How do I? — (*Then, looking at him*)
Alas, sir! How do you? You look not well.

ALSEMERO

You read me well enough: I am not well.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*almost frivolous*)

Not well, sir? Is it in my power to better you?

ALSEMERO

Yes.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*with affected tenderness*)

Nay, then you're cured again!

[*She touches him sweetly and looks into his eyes.*

ALSEMERO (*returning her gaze intently: deeply*)

Pray, resolve me one question, lady.

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*coyly*)

If I can.

ALSEMERO

None can so sure. Are you honest?

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*frightened, giggles uncertainly*)
That's a broad question, my lord!
[*She presses against him invitingly, trying to believe his question referred to* their *relation.*
ALSEMERO (*sternly*)
But that's not a modest answer, my lady.
(*He draws back from her. She giggles again, but trembles*)
Do you laugh? My doubts are strong upon me!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*recovering, putting on as bold a front as she can*)
'Tis innocence that smiles, and no rough brow
Can take away the dimple in *her* cheek!
Say I should strain a tear to fill the vault, —
Which would you give a better faith to?
ALSEMERO (*severe*)
'Twere but hypocrisy of a sadder color,
But the same stuff: neither your smiles nor tears
Shall move or flatter me from my belief.
(*She tries to flirt. Violently*)
I'll all demolish, and seek out truth within you —]
If there be any left?!
(*He seizes her hands: cruelly*) Let your sweet tongue
Prevent your heart's rifling! There I'll ransack,
And tear out my suspicion!
BEATRICE-JOANNA (*quiet: his hands pain her*)
You may, sir;
It is an easy passage. Yet, if you please,
Show me the ground whereon you lost your love.
My spotless virtue may but tread on that
Before I perish.
[*Her sweet duplicity momentarily disarms him, but "spotless virtue" makes him grip her with a sudden*

spasm that almost wrings a cry from her. He is ashamed of this, and releases her.

ALSEMERO

Unanswerable. —
A ground you cannot stand on: you fall down
Beneath all grace and goodness when you set
Your ticklish heel on it. There was a visor
Over that cunning face, and that became you:
Now impudence in triumph rides upon it!
(*Searchingly*)
How comes this tender reconcilement else
(*with a swift gesture up-stage*)
'Twixt you and your despite, your rancorous loathing,
De Flores? He that your eye was sore at sight of —
He's now become your arm's supporter, your
Lip's saint (*indicating that he has just seen that — and no more than that: which gives her sudden hope and courage*)!

BEATRICE-JOANNA

Is *there* the cause?!

ALSEMERO (*nodding; brutally*)

Worse: your lust's devil, —

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*sharply protesting*)

Would any but yourself say that, 'twould turn
Him to a villain!

ALSEMERO (*virulently*)

You are a strumpet!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*interrupting; passionately*)

What a horrid sound
It hath! It blasts a beauty to deformity!
Upon what face soever that breath falls,
It strikes it ugly! Oh, (*appealingly*) you have ruin'd
What you can ne'er repair again!

ALSEMERO (*unmoved; very bluntly*)

It was witnessd!

[*She is dumbfounded.*

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*recovering from her astonishment, and resolving to clear herself by a confession of the murder for his sake, which will explain what he has witnessed*)

Then hear a story of not much less horror
Than this your false suspicion is beguiled with:
I stand up innocence! — which even the guilt
Of one black other deed will stand for proof of:
Your love has made me a cruel murderess!

ALSEMERO (*a great light breaking on him*)

Ha!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*low, trying to worm herself into his compassion*)

I have kissed poison for it, stroked a serpent!
That thing of hate, worthy in my esteem
Of no better employment, and him most worthy
To be so employ'd, I have caused to murder
That innocent Piracquo, having
No better means than that worst to assure
Yourself to me.

ALSEMERO (*with terrible restraint*)

'Twas in my fears at first!
(*His bitter love breaks out*)
— Oh, thou art all deformed!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*trying to come close to him*)

Forget not, sir,
It for your sake was done! Shall greater dangers
Make the less welcome?

ALSEMERO (*with open, genuine passion*)

Oh, thou should'st have gone

A thousand leagues about to have avoided
This dangerous bridge of blood! Here we are lost!
(*He stops, thinks, — his greater suspicion returns to him; hoarsely*)
It must ask pause what I must do in this:
Meantime you shall be my prisoner only; enter!
(*She is much taken aback, but he resolutely opens the curtains, center*)
I'll be your keeper yet (*shuts them tensely after her*)!
(*To himself*) Oh, in what part
Of this sad story shall I first begin?!
(*He sees De Flores coming, left*)
Ha! this same fellow has put me in! — De Flores!
[*Enter De Flores, left.*

DE FLORES
Noble Alsemero?

ALSEMERO (*critically*)
I can tell you news, sir:
Beatrice-Joanna has her commended to you!

DE FLORES (*easily, but his suspicion betrays itself*)
That's news indeed, my lord. I think she would
Commend me to the gallows if she could, —
She ever loved me so well! — I thank her.
[*He bows, and will pass.*

ALSEMERO (*stopping him, takes his right hand*)
What's this blood upon your hand, De Flores?

DE FLORES (*greatly startled, jerking the hand back and looking at it*)
Blood? — No, sure, 'twas wash'd since!

ALSEMERO (*sharply*) Since when, man?

DE FLORES (*confused*)
Since — (*then, cannily*) t' other day, I got a knock
In a sword-and-dagger school. I think 'tis out.

ALSEMERO

Yes, 'tis almost out, but 'tis perceived, though!
I had forgot my message: this it is —
What price goes murder?

DE FLORES (*trembling*)

How, sir?

ALSEMERO (*inexorably*)

I ask *you*, sir.
There's one behindhand with you, she tells me,
For a brave bloody blow you gave for her sake
Upon Piracquo.

DE FLORES (*recklessly, cynically*)

Upon? 'Twas quite through him, sure!
Has she confessed it (*with scorn for her weakness*)?

ALSEMERO (*hotly*)

As sure as death to both of you! And much more
Than that.

DE FLORES (*smiling — here's his chance to sting the man*) It could not be *much* "more":
'Twas but one thing, and that — she is a whore.

ALSEMERO (*his last hope gone, stoically*)

It could not choose but follow.
(*And then in an access of rage he flings back the curtains and reveals Beatrice-Joanna, pale, large-eyed, and trembling. To her*) O cunning devils,
How should blind men know you from fair-faced saints?

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*faintly, beseechingly*)

He lies! The villain does belie me!

DE FLORES

Let me go to her, sir.
[*Beatrice-Joanna shrieks.*

ALSEMERO (*violently*)

Nay, you shall to her!
(*To Beatrice-Joanna*) Peace, crying crocodile! Your sounds are heard!
Take your prey to you! — Get you in to her, sir!
(*He shoves De Flores in and shuts the Curtains tightly, clinging to them, almost insane with passion*)
I'll be your pander now! Rehearse again,
That you be perfect when you come to act
Your scene of lust to the black audience
Where howls and gnashings shall be music to you!

[*Enter, right, Vermandero, Tomaso, the Servant, Franciscus and Antonio manacled, and Jasperino.*

VERMANDERO

O Alsemero, I've a wonder for you!

ALSEMERO (*with a great effort recovering himself and turning, loudly*)

No, sir, 'tis *I* — *I* have a wonder for you!

VERMANDERO (*excited*)

I have suspicion near as proof itself
For Piracquo's murder!

ALSEMERO (*louder, terribly*)

Sir, *I* have proof
Beyond suspicion for Piracquo's murder!!

VERMANDERO

Beseech you, hear me! — (*pointing to his two manacled gentlemen*) These, who have been disguised
E'er since the deed was done!

ALSEMERO (*shaking significantly the curtains he still clings to; penetratingly*) I have two other
That were more close disguised than your two could be,
E'er since the deed was done! — those nearer than

Your *servants*, that shall acquit them and prove them guiltless (*with a compassionate glance at the manacled men*)!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*within, shrieks, as though stabbed to death*) Oh, Oh, Oh!

ALSEMERO

Hark, 'tis coming to you!

DE FLORES (*within, shouting triumphantly*)

Nay, I'll along for company!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*whimpering, as in death*)

Oh, Oh!

VERMANDERO (*appalled*)

What horrid sounds are these?

ALSEMERO

Come forth, you twins

Of mischief!

[*He flings back the curtains, revealing them. Beatrice-Joanna lies at De Flores' feet: he holds her left hand in his left, and his sword naked in his right, and he drags her before him, half-dead, down left, facing them all across her.*

DE FLORES

Here we are! If you have any more
To say to us, speak quickly; I shall not
Give you the hearing else. I am *so* stout yet,
And so, I think, *this* broken rib of mankind!

VERMANDERO

An host of enemies entered my citadel
Could not amaze like this! Beatrice-Joanna (*starts across to her*)!

BEATRICE-JOANNA (*rousing; De Flores drops her hand and she supports herself on it*)

Oh, come not near me, sir! I shall defile you!

(*Alsemero checks the astounded Vermandero. Beatrice-Joanna sits up more strongly and points to De Flores*)

Beneath the stars, upon yon meteor
Ever hung my fate 'mongst things corruptible!
I ne'er could pluck it from him! My loathing
Was prophet to the rest, but ne'er believed.
My honor fell with him, and now my life!
Forgive me, Alsemero! All, forgive!
(*Her head drops, she falls, murmuring with her last breath*)
'Tis time to die when 'tis a shame to live!

DE FLORES (*with intense sincerity*)

I loved this woman in spite of her heart.
Her love I earn'd out of Piracquo's murder!

TOMASO

Ha! My brother's murderer?

[*He rushes across at him.*

De Flores points his sword at him, across Beatrice-Joanna's prostrate body.

Tomaso whips out his own sword, but is restrained by Alsemero and Vermandero, who drag him back, left and right of him respectively.

DE FLORES

Yes, and her honor's prize
Was my reward! I thank life for nothing
But *that pleasure!* It was so sweet to me
(*indicating with his sword that Beatrice-Joanna is dead, killed by him*)
That I have drunk up all — left none behind
For any man to pledge me!

[*He laughs gloriously at Alsemero.*

ALSEMERO (*springs at him across Beatrice-Joanna's body and tears the sword out of his hand*)
Horrid villain (*but De Flores only laughs still*)!
(*To Vermandero*) Keep life in him for further tortures!

DE FLORES (*hilariously*) No!
I can prevent you! (*Drawing the knife at his belt with his left hand*) Here's my penknife still!
It is but one thread more — (*wrenches free of Alsemero and stabs himself*) And now 'tis cut!
(*He sinks down by Beatrice-Joanna's head; huskily*)
Make haste, Joanna, by that token to thee, —
Canst not forget, — so lately put in mind!
I would not go to leave thee far behind!
[*Embracing her head, he expires.*

VERMANDERO
Oh, my name's enter'd now in that recórd
Where till this fatal hour 'twas never read!

ALSEMERO (*coming down left-center, very sternly*)
Let it be blotted out; let your heart lose it,
And it can never look you in the face
Nor tell a tale behind the back of life
To your dishonor! Justice hath so right
The guilty hit, that innocence is quit
(*referring to Antonio and Franciscus, whose manacles the Servant unlocks*)
By proclamation, and may joy again.
(*To Tomaso, as one wronged man to another*)
Sir, you are sensible of what truth has done;
'Tis the best comfort that your grief can find.

TOMASO (*center, still sword in hand, and glaring at the bodies*)
Sir, I am satisfied: my injuries

Lie dead before me: I can exact no more; —
Unless my soul were loose, and could o'ertake
Those black fugitives that are fled from hence,
To take a second vengeance! — But there are wraths
Deeper than mine, 'tis to be fear'd, about 'em.

[*He stands leaning on his sword, brooding upon them.*

ALSEMERO (*gently to Vermandero, who is still overwhelmed*)

Sir, you have yet a son's duty living.
Please you, accept it. Let that your sorrow
As it goes from your eye, go from your heart.
Man and his sorrow at the grave must part.

CURTAIN

SGANARELLE

OR

IMAGINARY HORNS

By Molière

A Free Translation based on that by Philip Moeller
Presented by the Washington Square Players at the
Comedy Theater, New York,
March 12–May 5, 1917

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INTRODUCTION

JEAN-BAPTISTE POQUELIN, the Parisian upholsterer's son, took the name of Molière when he espoused the theater, and presently made it deathless. Born in 1622, he went on the stage in 1643: formed with nine other actors The Illustrious Theater, which failed in Paris but endured on "the road"; and through many years of "stroller playing" he thoroughly learned his trade, his art, and his audience. In this apprenticeship Molière was certainly at some disadvantage as compared with Shakespeare two generations before. He had no settled playhouse, company and public for whom to rewrite or adapt old plays; no cultured patron or court audience, until at last (in 1658) he came again to Paris, for whom to elevate his style; and no great contemporary or collaborator like Marlowe, from whom to learn his craft in months instead of years. He had only — but in full measure — the opportunity to watch, conceive and develop the kind of comedy and character that Shakespeare sketched in the Bottom group of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and to adapt from Plautian sources, through Renaissance copies, the kind of farce that Shakespeare wrote in his *Comedy of Errors*. The combination of the two formed the ground — a restricted plot, but of rich soil — for all Molière's later playwriting.

The brief, conventional farces drawn straight from the Italian or Spanish and like them often largely improvised, which were regularly presented as after-pieces to the long verse-plays, classically ruled, that made up the standard repertory of the time, soon became Molière's particular responsibility. He was not a classic tragic actor, but in questions of sheer theatric, histrionic appeal to the comic sense of simple French provincials he was remarkable. Literature, in comedy, was not cultivated: only momentary stage-worthiness was sought. It remained for Molière himself, in his ripe forties, to give French comedy its first enduring literary dress and thereby immortalize for us some of his lesser farces. But these great plays — *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Les Femmes Savantes*, etc. — lie beyond our present concern. *Sganarelle* is a farce.

Molière's fresh, keen, satiric and theatrically exaggerated observation of real characters was necessarily slow to disengage itself from his old plots, routinely varied and played sometimes almost impromptu by *farceurs* habituated to certain stock parts — ultimately derived from the masks of Roman Comedy: a limited number of changeless, sometimes lifeless, but always ludicrous puppet characters. Sganarelle is such a mask, — a comic type which Molière invented and preferred to play himself. The name occurs among the *dramatis personæ* of many of his farces, following its first appearance in our play so titled, and it always betokens a physically ugly boor who is vain, pompous, and credulous beyond nature. He may be churlish, he may be exteriorly polished, but he is always vulgar, conceited, and

droll, — a poltroon and a gull. "Booby" might translate the name in general, but the particular combination of contemptible characteristics is best designated, in English as in French, Sganarelle.

Ancient comedy displayed contemptible persons [1] to be laughed at; Renaissance comedy added young lovers to be laughed with. Molière often combines the two with point and pleasure. His farce plots are not laboriously motivated, inventive, or well knit: they lead up to situations whose laughable qualities are century-tried and normally irresistible, without recking the improbabilities through which they reach their goal, the general guffaw. Transparent tricks and intrigues, forced mistakes, wilful blindnesses and deafnesses, the glaring unlikelihood of time and place and incident, culminate often in a *scène à rire* which to us is stale and flat from long iteration; and we conclude, in discreet privacy, that Molière is a tedious *farceur*. His lovers also are rarely individualized, and their stories and emotions are repetitive, conventional, and in truth uninteresting.

The whole effect of his lesser pieces then devolves upon the actors: and here Molière as much as Shakespeare was loyal to his profession and wrote fat parts. Whereas the young Shakespeare gave some of his company such outstanding minor parts as Mercutio and the Nurse, but others such "sticks" as Benvolio and Lady Capulet, Molière almost from the start presents vivid acting opportunities to nearly everybody in his cast. In the adaptation following, the Relative of Sganarelle's Wife has been somewhat developed, by change of sex, etc., beyond Molière's

[1] "Person" of course is but the Latin word for a theatrical mask.

momentary and colorless foil; and Villebrequin too is individualized above the stock figure Molière shoved upon the stage to finish his foolery; but this is in the text, and we cannot presume that the original players did not make their parts even more vivid than the present translator or adapter can suggest. Gros-René — another very small part — was one of the regular, recurrent masks, and the larger participants are all conventional, actor-proof characters except Madame Sganarelle, who (in spite of her lacking any individual name) seems a little more "observed," less copied from the Italo-Spanish formula, than the rest. The romantic story goes with simulated histrionic vim, an irrational precipitance and gusto truly theatrical; and the farce story leads up to Molière's big acting scene of the soliloquy and later the general comic imbroglio only resolved by the *Dea ex machinâ*, Célie's Maid, in true actor-playwright style. Gallic fervor and effusiveness may make credible for us the broadly obvious absurdities of the plot, at least while we sit in the theater, and for the rest, farce-humor and gallery-aimed, restraintless comic playing can win their meed of merriment in these situations as surely as in any other.

Puritans and purists, those of to-day more than of the seventeenth century, may object to holding cuckoldom aloft for Homeric laughter. The comedy of cuckoldry is in truth a mere convention, and must be accepted as such in an historical, not an actual, sympathy with the vulgar who, as Sganarelle says, can "only see a joke" in horns. Shakespeare almost never treats the subject comically, — witness not only Othello but Posthumus, Leontes, even Master

Ford, as against the very innocent chaffing of Benedick or Bassanio on the other side; yet it was a stock theme for laughter to his audience, taken advantage of by all his fellow-playwrights. His was probably a personal, not an artistic or moral, scruple; but Molière, — who, we know, was himself extremely jealous and with some cause, — employs it bold-faced to fetch all the guffaws it may. Based on the one-sexed, androcentric view of the world which we have all but outgrown, it treats a wife as a thing, a piece of property almost comparable to a cow or mare, but capable of getting itself stolen unless its owner guards or satisfies it. If the owner be an unsympathetic personage, then the spectator pleasantly imagines himself tricking him, supplanting him in his rights, mischievous not passionate, recking the woman means, not end, — and public opinion puts the horns of opprobrium and jeer upon the husband and disregards the wife as not responsible save to her possessor who may relieve his feelings upon her as he pleases. The point of view is difficult to-day, except through literary experience and repetition. It is a conventional humor, no longer spontaneously risible.[1]

Sganarelle was first produced on May 28, 1660, following the unprecedentedly long run of the more original comedy, in prose, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*. Both were mere one-act after-pieces. Although King Louis XIV and his court were absent from Paris,

[1] One of the best, most original things in our *Sganarelle* is the Wife's skepticism about the "double standard" and her jealousy paralleling her husband's, as though to prove that she is just as human and respectable as he. But she does not come off so well in the end; no explanation is deemed necessary to *her*.

Sganarelle eclipsed all records and was presented sixty-odd times during the summer. In England Sir William D'Avenant immediately incorporated it in an entertainment of his called *A Playhouse to Be Let*,[1] wherein several troupes perform before a theater proprietor that he may select the best to be his tenants. D'Avenant omitted Gros-René and the Wife's Relative, and translated the rest, with abbreviations, into very French English. The emphatic "accent," the false prosody, the extravagant shrug, gesticulation, grimace, and squeal or jabber which he clearly intended his "French" actors to employ, give theatrical life to D'Avenant's version, but of course are not at all representative of the true Molière. Most Little Theaters would rather present Molière to-day than D'Avenant, and let him make his own appeal, unfarced with even contemporary English burlesque. It is a pity that the version by Sir John Vanbrugh, about 1705, called *A Cuckold in Conceit*, was never printed and has not been preserved. We do not even know if it was in verse or prose. Since then, there has been no verse translation that the editor could discover until that of Philip Moeller presented by the Washington Square Players in March, 1917. This is a very free version, with frequent quips interpolated by Mr. Moeller, who is before all things a practical producer highly skilled in this type of lively and witty farce-comedy. It ran for nearly two months, proved its value, and is a very welcome addition to this volume. The editor has, with Mr. Moeller's permission, altered the dic-

[1] London theaters were just reopening after the eighteen years' darkness of Puritan rule.

tion in many places, inserted sentences of Molière's which he thought stage-worthy, and omitted others which Mr. Moeller had retained, attempted to bring the translation into closer fidelity to the original, and noted those points, original with Mr. Moeller, which he thought too useful or too striking and effective to give up. He has also varied the rhyme-scheme to include both alexandrines and octosyllabics, whereas both Molière and Moeller employ but one regulation couplet form. The rhyme is often a distinct part of the comic effect and should not be slurred but sharply struck. A staccato speech, an almost puppet-like suddenness and extremeness of movement, a frank artificiality of acting, ever aware of the audience, and an instinct for making and holding comic "points," will further stylize and strengthen the play. As an old thing, done quaintly, it will be more artistic and effective than in natural, simple presentation, — provided that masks and marionettes and the *commedia dell'arte* are alive in the producer's mind as it is rehearsed. Great as is Molière's fame in literature, not a bit of it depends upon this play; and Molière himself would be best pleased to see it done as a stage piece for purely theatric ends, not as a criticism of humanity or a dramatic poem! To lovers of the new, the whimsical, the picturesque and style-struck in the theater, it is, then, cordially dedicated.

STAGING

THE back drop, a sad necessity in this play, should be as candidly a back drop and as little representational as possible. It should show a flat design, in line and unshaded surface tint, of Parisian houses in 1660, decorative but not complicated or at all distracting. On either side is a practical house, Sganarelle's on the right and Gorgibus's on the left, each with a stone step before the door and a casement window in the down-stage wall. There is no reason why they should not be just alike except perhaps in color. Suppose Célie is a blonde and wears blue, her father and maid and Lélie should also wear cold colors, and her home, for contrast, be of warm brick hue. Suppose Sganarelle and his Wife are dark and wear hot tints, their house may be of some pale but vivid violet or green. The suggestion of a setting for marionettes will not be out of place. Free passage exists both above and below each house.

The lighting has no peculiarities.

CHARACTERS

GORGIBUS, Citizen of Paris. A small, middle-aged, volatile Frenchman, now peppery, now suave, in the elaborate costume of the time, including the periwig. He carries a cane, not a sword; and later doffs a nightcap, wig included.

CÉLIE, His Daughter. A bewitching young lady in curls, capable of passionate paroxysms but normally the conventional sweetheart. Her dress is beautiful and becoming, but not over-conspicuous.

MAID to Célie. A rosy, buxom woman of thirty-five or so, light on her feet, unrefined in speech or manner, not too plainly clad but mingling well with the gay ensemble of costumes, and rather blatantly sensible.

LÉLIE, Célie's Fiancé. A very small young hero, rigidly erect, decked out in all the finery of the age, with enormous plumes in his hat and a jewelled rapier at his side: a bantam gamecock filled to the brim with super-romantic sentiments.

GROS-RENÉ,[1] His Valet. A low-comedy servant, his clothes tattered, especially at the seat, and muddy, and his face peaked and worried. He is on the stage but a minute, and may be frankly grotesque.

[1] Pronounced Gro-renay.

SGANARELLE. He should be physically the biggest person on the stage: tall and pompous, made up with long upper lip, nose beaked and suspicious, eyes roving and expressive. He is rather more ornately, conceitedly dressed than Gorgibus, but not so highly as Lélie. Later, he dons breastplate, thigh-pieces, and helmet, and brandishes two big swords.

MADAME SGANARELLE, His Wife. A high-voiced shrew, a flashing brunette in her thirties, rather flaringly gowned, with long, lean and most expressive arms and hands. Though vulgar like her husband, she is not a wholly unsympathetic character, and she should have vivid "personality."

A RELATIVE of Hers. A very sedate and lofty spinster in her forties, coldly contemptuous of Sganarelle, stunningly robed and for the moment she is on the stage colorfully impressive.

HER PAGE. A tiny black boy in gaudy clothes who bears her train and makes faces, mocking both Sganarelle and his mistress.

VILLEBREQUIN,[1] Citizen of Paris. A neighbor and counterpart of Gorgibus, more grotesque looking than he, comical in himself, apart from the next to nothing he has to do.

[1] Pronounced Vee-yĕ-brĕ-ka′ ng — the "ng" not sounded.

THE CAST OF THE PLAY AT ITS ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

GORGIBUS	T. W. Gibson
CÉLIE	Margaret Mower
MAID	Elinor M. Cox
LÉLIE	Edward Balzerit
GROS-RENÉ	James Terbell
SGANARELLE	Arthur Hohl
MADAME SGANARELLE	Gwladys Wynne
RELATIVE	Helen Westley
PAGE	Frank Longacre
VILLEBREQUIN	Ralph L. Roeder
A SERVANT (to help carry Célie)	Phyllis Critcheson

NOTE. — In this production, some characters, especially Madame Sganarelle, Gros-René, and Célie's Maid, did not tally with the editor's descriptions. The latter, however, seem called for by the play as it stands, and should be followed by caster and costumer, rather than the photograph of the Washington Square production. Mr. Moeller agrees in this.

SGANARELLE

At the rise of the curtain, Célie flings open the house door on the left, flits down the steps, shaking her curly head, and turns with a defiant bob as Gorgibus looms in the doorway above her, drolly masked in an exaggerated scowl.

CÉLIE (*in a high-pitched little voice, almost shrieking, and stamping her foot*)

You need not hope my heart will ever yield!

GORGIBUS (*angry with a Gallic effusiveness that does not seem quite sincere*)

Little Impertinence! These tantrums are no shield!
(*He comes down to her; with sweeping gestures, severely*)
What? Check what *I* have resolved? My power not absolute?
Your wee brain to befool your father's reason?
Toot (*with a chuck under the chin, at which she glares*)!
(*More reasonably*)
Which of us governs here?
(*Célie flaunts away, floutingly. Gorgibus suddenly roars*) By'r Lady, understand,
My dear, to heat my bile will be to feel my hand!
(*Célie stops, droops; Gorgibus continues with finality but less roughly*)
Not one more syllable now! — my say is said:
You'll wed the husband that I'd have you wed!

CÉLIE (*with lowered eyes, in an affectedly appealing wail*)

Alas, ah me!

GORGIBUS (*irascibly*)

That's right! Expostulate!
He's got ten thousand ducats — and you hesitate!
(*Then snatching away the gaudy little book she carries in her left hand*)
This is the fruit of *reading!* (*He looks at it*) Poets' trash!
(*To her, forcibly*)
You'd turn ten thousand ducats down? In cash?
To blazes with those romances you've read (*flinging the book off-stage*)!
Study and heed the "Sinner's Guide," instead!
Study, and learn that virtue's only way
Is for a child to hearken and obey!

CÉLIE (*raising her eyes to him coquettishly*)

But papa, you yourself engaged my troth
To Lélie! (*With romantic ardor*) How can I forget that oath?
(*Sidling toward him, sweetly*)
Disposing of one's self without your seal
Is wrong — I know; — but *think* what *I* must *feel!*

GORGIBUS

Even were your troth involved more deeply still,
Another's wealth outweighs that petty bill;
For no consideration has a stitch
Of showing, as against becoming rich.
Money hath charms to beautify the plain,
And without money, all the rest is vain.
Perhaps Valère is *not* your sweetheart *now:*
He *will* be, when he has your wifely vow!
Once to be *wed* — has more weight than you think.
(*Speculating*)
Love often follows marriage: there's some link. . . .

Prepare your heart for 't with all moderate speed:
'Tis opportunity that does the deed.
If it *proves* difficult, be not afraid, —
For habit easily trains a timid maid.
(*He catches himself up as though he ought not to have said that*[1] *and thumps with the stick in his left hand*)
But why am I here arguing? (*Imperiously*) I command!
(*To Célie, curtly*)
He's coming to call this evening: if you stand
On dignity, or pout, or fail to please —
I'll — but I'd rather not say what.

(*As he starts stumping across her, she puts up her hands to him in a last appealing little gesture. Relenting, firmly, but kindly*) Don't tease!

[*And he goes off, up right, without looking back. Meanwhile the Maid appears in the doorway.*

THE MAID (*regarding Célie's dejection incredulously; cheeringly*)
What, mademoiselle? *Repulse* what other folks *embrace?*
Choke over a word delicious as this "yes"?
(*Expansively, as she steps down on to the stage*)
I'd toss out a dozen!
(*With mock sentimentality*) Ah, while Martin lived
I had cherubic color, my figure thrived,
My glance was gay, my spirits high.
(*With pretended tears*)
Look at me now: it'll make you cry!
(*This, with her ruddy plumpness, brings a laugh*)
Then, I could *sleep* in dead-o'-winter nights:

[1] And indeed the last two couplets are Moeller's, not Molière's.

(*Reminiscently*)
A man's "God bless you," ere he snores, delights!
To feel him next you snuggling as he please;
Tightening the blankets, if you chance to sneeze;
— A man's a treasure!
(*Then, awaking and seeing Célie's great eyes upon her, turning it off with a sorry little laugh*)
But his proper worth
A woman only reckons in his dearth! [1]

CÉLIE (*very seriously*)
Wouldst thou too bid me rend my troth in twain,
Forsaking Lélie for this gilded swain?

THE MAID (*soothingly*)
Time presses, and your Lélie tarries long.
(*Insinuatingly*)
I fear, his absence means your faith some wrong.

CÉLIE
Ah, my heart shudders at thy horrid presage!
(*She pulls out Lélie's miniature from her bosom and soulfully regards it*)
See the eternal ardors in this visage!

THE MAID (*with double meaning*)
Features so fair *do* mark fine lovers!

CÉLIE (*reproachfully*)
And yet they may be but deceiving covers?

THE MAID (*pretending to philosophy*)
Maybe yes, and then too, maybe no.
Man's fancy follows where the new winds blow.

CÉLIE (*stagily romantic*)
Love's rites were forfeit, and all honor dead,
Ere *he* could love another in my stead!

[1] These last two couplets also are Moeller's, not Molière's.

(*Again studying the miniature*)
Such perfect beauty, pictured by such art,
Is but the image of his priceless *heart!*
(*To the Maid, with feigned passion*)
And *thou* wouldst *smudge* the glory of this saint?!
(*She kisses the picture and then in her transport lets it fall*)
Ah me! My heart deserts me, and I faint!
[*She suddenly swoons theatrically towards the Maid, who catches and supports her.*[1]

THE MAID (*protesting shrilly*)
Mademoiselle! Bon Dieu! Don't be so quaint!
(*Célie slips unconscious to the ground*)
Swooning for love?!
(*She sees Sganarelle just opening his house door opposite, and impulsively yells to him*)
Quick! Help! Bring her to bed!

SGANARELLE (*springs out and slams the door after him; then piously looking heavenward proclaims with funereal pomp*) [2]
Behold me! I am here!

THE MAID (*indicating Célie at her feet, with wide, French gestures*) She's almost dead!
[*She squats and begins chafing Célie's wrists, etc.*

SGANARELLE (*lowers his gaze from the heights to Célie, steps down and toward her; stiffly*)
What, is that all? Methought the shriek I'd heard
Of Judgment-day!

[1] These four couplets, newly developed from bare hints in the original, lessen the artificial suddenness there of Célie's swoon, and give the actress a chance to work up to it with some truth to character and probability.

[2] This entrance of his is sheer buffoonery.

(*To the prostrate Célie*)

Madame (*bowing politely*), dead? — Not a word!

[*He looks at the Maid for explanation of this incivility.*

THE MAID (*getting up impatiently*)

Here, cherish her till I bring *help!* (*As she turns round*) I find

A man's one *use* is — oh, well, never mind![1]

[*She goes into the house, left.*

Sganarelle kneels above Célie, lifts her head to his thigh, and inanely feels for her heart-beat first on her right side and then on her left.

SGANARELLE

Cold here! — and here! But breathing? Let me see.

[*He puts his mouth very close to hers, and at this fatal moment his Wife opens the window of her house, right.*

MADAME SGANARELLE (*while her husband continues to murmur witlessly over Célie*)

What's this? What's that? Himself! Deceiving me!
I've had my doubts, but now 'tis very fact!
I'll hurry down and catch him in the act!

[*She disappears from the window.*

SGANARELLE (*still embracing Célie, but of course plainly showing that he has never before been so intimate with her*)

It would be wrong of her to die
and let herself be lacked!

[1] Quite Mr. Moeller's. An alternative speech in the original may be paraphrased:

"Deign to be porter for me; (*hastening to allay his open-mouthed alarm*) she's quite thin;
She needs some vinegar, so I'll run on in."

It's utter foolishness to try
to pass to Heaven's bliss
When one can stay so — why —
er — comfortably in this!

[*The Maid interrupts "this" — running out, unceremoniously lifting Célie around the knees while Sganarelle staggers to his feet, clasping her shoulders; and they carry her quickly into the house, the door of which is shut behind them from within,*

The opposite door is flung open, and Sganarelle's Wife rushes on.

MADAME SGANARELLE (*stopping short, right center*)
Already gone! 'Tis sin that speeds the hoof!
I saw the hussy in his arms! What further proof
Have I to seek? His poisonous perfidy
(*with a gathering sob*)
Now makes it more than very clear to me
Why he has left my hungry heart to pine,
Feeding his own base tastes while starving mine!
What am I saying? — Oh, my heart's distraught!
A wife is everything, and then she's nought!
Why can't the law give *us* the right to range,
And husbands, like chemises, freely change?
(*At first abashed at the sight of the listening audience, she quickly grows quite confidential with them*)
Some *men* would like it quite as well as *we*.
(*She sees the picture Célie dropped, and picks it up*)
What's this, a jewel my fate presents to me?
I'll open it, and see.

[*She stands studying the miniature, half turned away from the door, left, as Sganarelle reënters there.*

SGANARELLE (*shuts the door after him in a very self-satisfied way, and remarks*) She still held life.

Dying is not so simple.
(*He perceives Madame*) Ah, my wife!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*oblivious of his presence, rapt in the portrait*)
How cleverly these deftest touches trace
The contour and the tinting of a face!
(*Sganarelle watches her rapture with growing suspicion*)
What art here captured in a thumb-nail's span
The pretty features of a proper man!

SGANARELLE (*darkly*)
Why does her gazing thus her glow enhance?
Evaporates mine honor at her glance?
A sure suspicion sets mine eyes askance!
[*He sidles nearer, scrutinizing her out of the corners of his eyes.*

MADAME SGANARELLE (*still unconscious*)
A might of charms this precious trinket tells!
(*She lifts it to her lips, and exclaims*)
O-oo! 'Tis perfumed! My, how sweet it smells!

SGANARELLE (*unheard by her*)
So, so, my sweet! I'm not surprised at this!
(*Hissing*)
With mine own eyes I see her sacrilegious kiss!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*cooing to herself, dwelling on every word*)
How ravishing 'twould be, lovingly to be served
By such a man as this? Thus tempted, who is not swerved?
Were he but here, and asked me, — wouldn't I requite
My homely husband for withholding my delight?!
[*Sganarelle in a towering rage snatches the miniature from her.*

SGANARELLE

I have you now! — And sullying my repute!
By Beelzebub — may he carry you off, to boot —
What rarer partner could you wish than *me?*
What can be slurred or slighted about me —
Me, me, whom maids beguile with flattering skill
And married dames with methods franker still?! —

MADAME SGANARELLE (*thinking her wrongs are but confirmed at this*)

What, you?

SGANARELLE (*continuing in voluble fury*)

Yes, me! — A husband tried and true
You find not exquisite enough for you,
So to my legal comfort, you would add
The fresher relish of some pretty lad!
(*Overbearing her*)
My port, my love-provoking countenance,
Fire a thousand beauties at a glance.
They pine, but you have such an appetite
Your husband's but an *hors d'œuvre* to *this* wight!
[*He looks, for the first time, at the picture.*

MADAME SGANARELLE (*dangerously cold, eyeing him as much as to say, "Do you know what you're admitting?"*)

Perhaps by this imaginative rant
You think to keep me silent? — Well, you can't!

SGANARELLE (*chiefly interested now in the picture*)

Now, not another word!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*warningly, resenting this even more*)

I'm cross enough!
Don't put me any further in a huff!

SGANARELLE (*threatening*)

I'll put you in a ——

MADAME SGANARELLE (*imperatively*)
Give me back my trinket!

SGANARELLE (*derisively*)
And him, too — the original? — Don't think it!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*her fingers crook'd to scratch*)
Take care, you're vexing me!

SGANARELLE (*with the most elaborate sarcasm*)
What, sweet? *I, vex?*
(*With a significant salute*)
My forehead thanks you —— till I wring your necks!
(*He looks again at the miniature*)
Ah, the young, exquisite, pert paramour!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*through her teeth*)
Continue!

SGANARELLE (*to her, bitterly*)
So, "Cornelius," now, for sure,
Sir Horn, they'll name me!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*very scornfully spitting*)
What! Do you hope these lies
Will blind me to your *own* licentious ties?

SGANARELLE (*astounded*)
What's that?

MADAME SGANARELLE
What's what? The base effontery!
Ex-cuse yourself, eh, by ac-cusing me?!
Well, plaintiff or defendant, — we shall see!

SGANARELLE
Bon Dieu! And do you think with such a quick-wit trick
To seem as blameless as a new-laid chick?

MADAME SGANARELLE
Seem what you will — cajole and swear and kiss —

But fool no more with me, — and give me this!

[*She snatches the picture from him and runs off, down right.*

SGANARELLE

Was ever man by such low deeds beset?
She thinks me crazy, but I'll get her yet!

[*He runs off after her.*

From up left enters Lélie, smartly, with Gros-René, his valet, limping wearily behind, panting and groaning.

GROS-RENÉ

At last we're here! And, master, in God's name,
Let's stop! — or I'll be going lame!
For eight whole days we've ridden without a rest.
Our jogging nags were like a jumping pest.
I'm all done up! Though you strut debonair,
I'm sore all over!
(*Displaying the frayed and ragged condition of his nether garments*) Need I mention where?
We've got here, and no sooner shook the nags,
Than started off, without a bite, in rags!

LÉLIE (*pausing, center, and gazing up at Célie's house, with right romantic warmth*)

Blame not my press of speed! My adored Célie
I heard was new-espoused — and not by me!

GROS-RENÉ (*whimsically, and more truly than he knows*)

Yes, but a belly-balance would help your brain
To weigh the facts, and if your heart's in pain
A meal would ameliorate —

LÉLIE (*cutting short his poor pleasantries*)

I cannot eat!

GROS-RENÉ (*with more spirit*)

Hang me if *I* can't! Yes, and drink with meat!

(*Dolefully breaking into an old ditty*)

"To keep off the temptation to peak and to pine,
There's nothing like twenty good glasses of wine!"

LÉLIE (*peremptorily*)

Be silent! Not to save my life could I —

GROS-RENÉ (*accenting each word*)

Unless I do, I'll very shortly die!

LÉLIE (*in lordly rebuke*)

Throes of anxiety, not hunger, rack *me!*

GROS-RENÉ

Anxiety and hunger both ransack me!
(*With genuine appeal*)
For seven days I haven't left my shoes!

LÉLIE (*waving him off, as he crosses toward Célie's door*)

Leave me, to satisfy *myself* with *news.*

GROS-RENÉ

Do! And *I'll* "satisfy" with bread and booze!
(*To the audience, fleetly*)
A proper servant 's he who understands
To act instanter when his lord commands!

[*He runs out, up right.*

LÉLIE (*almost mooning, to himself, as he hesitates to knock on Célie's door*)

No, no, my soul is given too much to fear!
I have her father's promise, and her own clear
Proofs of a love that buoys up my hope.

[*He interrupts himself at sight at Sganarelle.*

SGANARELLE (*returning from down right, absorbed in the miniature in his hands*)

I've got it! Now I'll study out the scope
Of this disgrace.
(*He noses the portrait, and looks up astonished*)
How now? I know him not!

LÉLIE (*peering from the step, left*)
My picture — is it? — that this fellow's got?
SGANARELLE (*squeezing out a tear*)
Ah, poor Sganarelle! My honor is no more!
LÉLIE (*with Gallic quickness of apprehension*)
My pledge to her? — My faith is troubled sore!
SGANARELLE
Oh, arrant wife! That such a *thing* as this
Should hang me all about with hint and hiss —
Supplanted by this paltry, perfumed page —
Horned in the blooming April of mine age!
[*He ends in a paroxysm of self-pity.*
LÉLIE (*descending the steps manfully*)
There is no doubt. That *is* my miniature!
SGANARELLE (*looking up at Lélie, rather startled*)
This man's intentions are, at least, obscure!
[*He withdraws somewhat toward the right.*
LÉLIE (*cocky*)
I am amazed. I'll hail him. Sir — one word!
SGANARELLE (*slinking*)
What is he after? I'll not be deter'd!
(*Examining the picture again he starts, and looks quickly from it to Lélie*)
Is *this* my man — or rather hers, my wife's?
(*More horrified than pleased at the surprise*)
The shock would be too great for my weak life's
Supporting —
LÉLIE (*very aristocratic*)
Pray, that picture in your hand —
SGANARELLE (*violently, to cover his unreadiness*)
'Tis he! (*Sarcastically*) You're anxious, sir; and understand:
(*more and more quickly, his speech impelling him*

nearer and nearer to Lélie, who stands bewildered)
This true resemblance sheds a perfect light.
I may be blind, but some things need no sight.
Remotely though the matter touches me,
When you have heard I think that you'll agree
In future that you'd best oblige me, sir,
By having nothing more to do with her!

LÉLIE (*instantly responding to the threat*)
Explain your meaning, man, or by my life — !

SGANARELLE (*instantly cowed; surly*)
'Tis simply done: the lady is my wife.
(*Lélie, now, starts back in horror. Sganarelle, reanimated, glares at him*)
I know not in the course of your affair
If I was ever mentioned; but I'm there!
And husbands *can* most strongly disapprove —

LÉLIE (*agonized*)
Husband?

SGANARELLE (*wryly*)
Marry, you've marred the marriage-groove.
My fame will ooze and leak now till I'm hearsed!

LÉLIE (*incredulous*)
Married to her!

SGANARELLE (*quickly seizing his advantage to escape and seek support*) And since the town's athirst —
To tell her loving kin, I'll be the first!
[*He suddenly spins around and stalks off, up right.*

LÉLIE (*in amorous lamentation*)
Alas, 'tis true! this news that stalked about,
Wedding my Célie to an ugly lout!
Though loyal oaths to me could not dissuade her,
A sense of beauty had, at least, delayed her!
Quick though my journey, I have come too late.

He runs to lose, who races with swift fate.[1]
(*He falters as he stands*)
What's this? I'm weak! I can no more sustain
My body's effort nor my spirit's pain!
The shock, and my hard travel's aftermath
Make my heart quail, my senses lose their path —
[*He staggers, and is about to faint when Madame Sganarelle reënters from the house, right, her market basket on her arm.*

MADAME SGANARELLE (*crosses, babbling to herself*)
In spite of me, that faithless spouse — Help, quick!
(*For Lélie, stumbling to her, supports himself on her shoulder*)
What ails you?

LÉLIE (*faintly*)
Crave your pardon!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*relieved that he is not drunk*)
Oh, you're sick!

LÉLIE (*with reviving dignity*)
Madame! A transitory swooning-spell —
[*And then he has to grab her around the neck.*

MADAME SGANARELLE (*comically*)
I'd hate to see you faint *here!*
(*Shaking him*) Come, get well!
(*He stands up, and she, seeing how handsome he is but not recognizing him, says more kindly*)
Come in here, till it's over.

LÉLIE (*still weakly*)
With permission.
[*He crosses, unaided, toward the door, right.*

[1] This couplet is Moeller's, not Molière's.

MADAME SGANARELLE (*excusing herself to the audience as she follows*) [1]

I couldn't leave him here, in that condition?

[*They disappear into the house.*

Enter, up right, Sganarelle, trailing a pompous Relative of his Wife's. Her train is held by a little black page, who mimics her every movement and makes fun of Sganarelle too.[2]

THE POMPOUS RELATIVE (*sailing diagonally across the stage, talking loudly to Sganarelle behind her*)

Care on that point in husbands I commend,
But you catch fire a little fast, my friend.
Everything I have heard you say against her
Is inconclusive — (*apologetically*) I'm, of course, a spinster —
And, well, it's a delicate subject. Say no more,
(*turning, left center*)
Unless you have sure proof right at your door.

SGANARELLE (*whining*)

I've seen them both. Isn't the picture proof?

THE RELATIVE

A doubt too prompt may only find *re*proof.
Let's learn the facts, and *if* her guilt we trace,
Then's time to punish her as fits the case.

SGANARELLE (*shaking his head doggedly*)

I told you that I saw them. That's enough.

THE RELATIVE (*coldly*)

I'll say no more, lest you with rash rebuff —

[*With a haughty glare she starts up-stage, with her page boy after her, imitating it; but Sganarelle stops her.*

[1] Not in Molière.

[2] This very effective business is Mr. Moeller's.

SGANARELLE (*insistently shaking the miniature under her nose*)
Isn't the picture proof that she deceives?
THE RELATIVE (*in final tall rebuke as she sails off past him, up left*)
He who suspects already half believes![1]
[*The page-boy, turning, makes a face at Sganarelle just as he disappears.*
SGANARELLE (*clutching his temples*)
Perhaps she's wrong, and then perhaps she's right!
Perhaps my honor *hasn't* suffered slight.
Perhaps I feel two horns in my hair
(*reaching outward as though feeling along them*)
When, truth to tell, there's nothing there!
Perhaps my anxious mind is over-shrewd.
(*He glances towards his house*)
I'd best investigate, and *then* conclude!
(*At this instant his house door opens and Lélie reënters, turning on the top step to bow low to Madame Sganarelle, who appears behind him*)
What! At my door the picture's counterpart!
This is the real thing this time, sure and smart!
MADAME SGANARELLE (*to Lélie, quite sweetly*)
You're hurrying away too soon, Monsieur!
This faintness may return if you bestir.
(*As seductively as she can*)
Come in again!
LÉLIE (*scarcely hiding his distaste for her*)
My strength you have renewed.
Adieu, and once again, my gratitude!
[*He bows very low to her, and steps down.*

[1] These last two couplets, and the "business," are Moeller's, not Molière's.

SGANARELLE (*aside, as Madame Sganarelle curtsies*)
They're caught! And now to all the world I'll shout it!
(*Lélie again bows low: Madame curtsies anew: Sganarelle is at his wits' end*)
And look, by God, — they're quite polite about it!
(*Then Madame Sganarelle withdraws into the house, reluctantly closing the door, and Lélie, turning round, confronts Sganarelle*)
He sees me! Now I wonder what he'll say!

LÉLIE (*to himself*)
How that man's visage blackens brightest day!
But I'll not waste on him my bitter hate:
We both are baubles in the hands of fate.
(*He approaches Sganarelle: and at this moment Célie appears at her window and recognizes Lélie*)
Thus one man's luck another's will undo!
(*To him; then, catching sight of Célie and shuddering as he passes close by Sganarelle*)
Your peerless wife, sir, makes me envy you.
[*He quickly turns and walks off, right.*
Sganarelle, who has doubtfully been backing up before him, stands aghast.

SGANARELLE
Sharp, terse, quick, pat, complete, concise and brief!
(*Gazing open-mouthed after him*)
Such impudence is really past belief!
I feel as if their sprouting had begun!
(*One hand apprehensively feels his forehead, while the other clenches and he shakes it after Lélie, shouting*)
No honest man could do the things you've done!
[*Célie, at her window, is unable to see this, but is deeply perturbed.*

CÉLIE

'Twas Lélie surely, and 'tis passing queer
He'd keep it hid from *me* that he was here!
[*She darts away from the window, evidently on her way out.*

SGANARELLE (*furious*)

"Your peerless wife, sir, makes me envy you!"
(*Coming down center*)
How peerless in her guilt himself best knew!
(*Stopping*)
Why did I let him slip away like that?
I might at least have jostled off his hat,
(*Célie here runs out of her house and up-stage, looking off after Lélie*)
Or flung a stone, or yanked his laces out
And summoned all the neighbors to the rout!

CÉLIE (*coming down to him*)

Your pardon, sir, — but do you chance to know
With *whom* you spoke, a little while ago?

SGANARELLE (*turning, with pharisaic severity and dudgeon*)

Madame, his worth I can but ill commend.
I know him not, — but (*very significantly*) he's a family friend.

CÉLIE (*not understanding, but sympathetically*)

You seem disturbed?

SGANARELLE (*seizing on this flattering sympathy: most lugubriously*) Don't interrupt my sighs!

CÉLIE (*smiling*)

Uncommon heavy!

SGANARELLE Oh, they've no disguise. —
(*With a sudden sob*)
I spurn him — but my *wife* feels otherwise!

CÉLIE (*startled*)
How's that? — This gentleman (*pointing incredulously after Lélie*) — ?
SGANARELLE Is far from pure.
CÉLIE (*hesitating*)
Are you — ?
SGANARELLE (*with another sob*)
As sure as eyes could make me sure!
(*Apologetically*)
'Tis *difficult*, dishonor to endure!
(*He appears to break down and weep. The audience laughs, and he wails through his tears*)
And, worse, comes laughter in dishonor's wake!
[*Which may also be a recollection of the black boy's grimace.*
CÉLIE (*bitterly glaring after Lélie*)
False love! —
SGANARELLE (*astonished, forgetting to cry*)
My side, my sorrow, you partake?!
CÉLIE (*careless of him, absorbed in her growing anger*)
Stained with such perfidy, shouldst thou not quake?
(*Crying out*)
O Heavens, is it true?
SGANARELLE (*quite self-center'd, shaking his head*)
Too true for me.
CÉLIE (*ablaze*)
Double-faced traitor!
SGANARELLE
Yes! I quite agree!
CÉLIE (*to the audience, in a most becoming fury*)
Ah, my forebodings intimated such!
SGANARELLE (*alarmed at her emotion*)
Pray, mademoiselle, don't take on too much!

(*Warmly, almost genially*)
I never guessed such good existed still, —
That one should suffer for another's ill.

CÉLIE (*with passion*)
This heart that never strayed, the ever true, —
Oh, it deserves the scorn you've bared it to!

SGANARELLE (*self-gratulating*)
Ah!

CÉLIE
But I know a tit for tat

SGANARELLE (*in pleased wonder*)
What heat,
Because another's wife 's been indiscreet!
(*To the audience, reproachfully*)
Some people would have only seen a joke,
But *you* (*turning to Célie*) —

CÉLIE (*impetuously*)
Unless I act at once, I'll choke!

SGANARELLE (*taken aback*)
But, Madame, please —

CÉLIE
My soul's on vengeance bent!

SGANARELLE
But, Madame, pray —

CÉLIE
Which to the full I'll vent!

[*She runs back into the house, left.*

SGANARELLE (*to the audience*)
Who could such stormy rectitude withstand?
I'm better, now this trouble's off *my* hand! [1]
But wait a bit: so swift to deeds *she* flew
She clearly showed me what *I* ought to do!

[1] More Moeller's than Molière's.

(*Then in mock indignation*)
I'll teach him how he's got to answer me
For trifling with my proper property!
(*He struts about a few steps and then pauses doubtfully*)
He looked quite timid — yes — but just the same
Ofttimes much strength imbues a stripling frame.[1]
(*He begins to ponder*)
I would not have him decorate my back
To match my front — first horn me and then thwack!
Some little thought my acid hate may sweeten.[1]
(*Virtuously*)
I have no wish to beat — or to be beaten!
(*He shakes his head*)
'Tis gracious from a quarrel to withhold
A heart like mine that's much too overbold.
Why should I risk my just and fair renown
Of being quite the gentlest man in town?
That's how the matter, viewed in one light, stands;
But in another — wrong, revenge demands! —
(*Dismissing that with a little shudder*)
Mere sophistry, too specious, and too pat!
Only a simpleton would act like that.
Suppose he topples me horns-over-heels?
Would that reduce the hurt my honor feels? [1]
Suppose my stomach — sensitive! — should feel
(*with a vivid gesture*)
A half a yard or so of Spanish steel,
Wouldst thou, my Honor, fatten on that meal?
Would I by dying thus a hero's death
Dilute the venom in a gossip's breath? [1]

[1] More Moeller's than Molière's.

A man like me who's rheumatism's slave
Could never stand the dampness of a grave!
Let those who will with points for honor strive, —
I'd rather be less honored, and alive!
Does an imaginary horn distort
A manly figure, crook a leg, make short
One's stature? No! My silly anger cools.
Our wives do folly, and *we're* made the fools!
'Tis an abuse that the police should see to,
To punish husbands, when their wives are free to —
(*Interrupting himself conclusively*)
I'll be the first to teach this stupid city
That I'll not be the butt of pun nor pity!
I'll bruit her prank so blithely everywhere
That all the world can see I do not care!

[*He marches off, up right.*[1]

Célie, still in petulant determination, comes out of the house, left, with her Maid behind her.

Gorgibus opportunely enters down right, and Célie trips out to meet him.

CÉLIE

Papa, a word with you!
(*He pretends to be angry still, and crosses her*)
Papa!

GORGIBUS (*turning by the step*)

What's this?
Well, Miss! Have you decided to dismiss
Your stubbornness? [2]

[1] This famous soliloquy — thirty-four couplets in the original, comparable to Falstaff's reflections on Honor — has in these forty-one lines been rather paraphrased than translated, and the improbable *volte-face* at its end avoided.

[2] More Moeller's than Molière's.

CÉLIE (*dramatically*) My duty ousts my whim!
What man soe'er you will — I'll marry him!
GORGIBUS (*straightening up and beaming*)
Hola! That's splendid! My, I feel so spry
I'd cut a caper — were there no one by!
(*He tries to, but can't*)
Well, never mind the jig! A kiss, instead,
Upon a duteous daughter's duteous head!
(*He kisses her on the brow. The audience — or, if they fail, the Maid — are laughing at him*)
There's nothing here for scandal or your mirth,
Though I grow boy again with her good birth.
THE MAID (*in the doorway, as he starts to go in, somewhat ruffled*)
But master, 'twas a cruel way to test her.
GORGIBUS (*surveying her, till she drops up-stage on the lower step*)
Ahem—! And now, my afternoon siesta![1]
[*He goes into the house.*
THE MAID (*on the step*)
Your sudden shift, Madame, surprises me.
CÉLIE
When you know why I've shifted, you'll agree
'Twas righteous!
THE MAID Oh, well, then, no further chatter!
This man or that, it really doesn't matter.
CÉLIE
Perhaps you're right.
THE MAID
Perhaps! Well, anyhow,
Make up your mind;[2] for see — he's coming now!

[1] Moeller's, not Molière's.

[2] These last two dozen words are Moeller's, not Molière's.

CÉLIE (*seeing Lélie entering, up right*)
Quick, let us hurry in! I cannot face
This man who loves another in my place!
(*The Maid opens the door: but Lélie darts on to the step between her and Célie, who cries, startled and indignant*)
Sir!

LÉLIE (*bowing with extreme politeness*)
Madame!

CÉLIE
What? You have the impudence
To dare address me after your offense?

LÉLIE (*sweeping his plumed hat about: romantic*)
Mon Dieu, but you shall hear my just reproaches!

CÉLIE (*haughtily*)
Such insolence on my privacy encroaches.

LÉLIE (*wildly*)
Live on, then! Spurn my memory! — Content
With the grand glorious spouse you'll yet repent!

CÉLIE (*on the verge of tears*)
I'm promised — yes — and hope it makes *you* cry!
(*Lélie, speechless, with a wild, stagy gesture asks* why, *and expresses despair. Célie almost weeps*)
Perhaps you think, false friend, to blind my eye
With innocently asking questions why? [1]

[*Sganarelle suddenly reënters from his house, armed to the teeth.*

SGANARELLE (*on his doorstep*)
War! War to the utterance on this rogue!
Now that I'm armed, I'll kill, — and be in vogue!
Yes, yes! I've had a sudden change of heart,

[1] This dialogue is a free paraphrase, only, of Molière's.

And, now I'm full-caparisoned, I'll start!

[*He descends, awkwardly in his "harness."*

CÉLIE (*to Lélie, pointing at Sganarelle*)

Look there, the sorry victim of your guilt!

LÉLIE (*with marked antithesis of* looks *and* love)

And for such looks as those, my love you'd jilt? [1]

[*With a sorry gesture, "enough!" he stalks down-stage, left.*

SGANARELLE (*right: still trying to work himself into a rage*)

My dander's up. I'm angry for the nonce.
Lion courage quivers on my bristling sconce.
Carnage for infamy's the one response!
In halves his handsome heart I'll split!
I see him! I must hurry it!

[*He very cautiously begins to edge up-stage, to get behind Lélie; but his armor cannot be kept quiet, and at the strange clank Lélie suddenly turns and Sganarelle stops, shivering and tinkling.*

LÉLIE

Those swords?

(*An awkward pause. Sganarelle denies that he's ever seen a sword*)

That suit?

(*Sganarelle looks down on his armor as though it were a miracle to* him)

Be brief, sir, and explain!

[*He crosses Célie towards Sganarelle, up center.*

SGANARELLE (*in trembling accents*)

I always wear this when it looks like rain.

(*He shrinks back, watching Lélie: then pounds his chest with the knobs of his sword-handles till the breast-*

[1] These last five lines are not Molière's.

plate resounds, crying hoarsely to himself)

Craven! I'll *make* you brave, in season!

CÉLIE (*to Lélie, vehemently*)

The sight of him attests your ugly treason!

LÉLIE (*throwing his hands up*)

What worth you find in him 's beyond all reason!

CÉLIE (*romantic*)

Desist, deceiver! Yours from him I learned!

SGANARELLE (*hissing*)

Listen, she takes my part!

(*Lélie turns toward him, puzzled: and he winces again*)

I am discerned!

(*Lélie turns his back, and bows very gallantly and ironically to Célie*)

Now! With such thirst for blood I've never burned![1]

'Twere easily done, now that his back is turned.

[*But suddenly and by intent in his elaborate bow, Lélie bumps into Sganarelle, stands straight, turns and surveys him royally, and then speaks with the sharpest sarcasm to Célie.*

LÉLIE

Your choice is one I cannot but admire.

CÉLIE (*half-blinded with her tears and feelings, totally misunderstanding him*)

Yes! He's the pattern of my heart's desire!

LÉLIE

Your best defense he surely will require!

SGANARELLE (*in the background, but heroically*)

Ah, she does nobly to defend my rights!

(*To Lélie*)

In sooth against the law were your delights!

Blood, blood alone can satisfy my ire!

[1] These six lines are a condensed paraphrase of twelve of Molière's.

(*At this moment Madame Sganarelle appears at her window and sees Sganarelle approach Lélie with both swords lifted high, and again shrink back as Lélie turns on him amazed but threateningly*)

Were 't not my spirit is a gentle one —

(*drawing further away, his swords shaking, his voice almost tearful*)

I'd kill you on the spot, and thus have done!

[*His accent on the last two words shows that he only, heartily, wishes he were out of it.*

LÉLIE (*looking from him to Célie and back again, beginning to be alarmed at his environment*)

This fellow's mad.

(*Then to Sganarelle, desperately*)

Now by our suffering Savior,

Good sir, explain your most unique behavior!

SGANARELLE (*whimpering, almost begging mercy, but with some shreds left of proper indignation*)

Good Christian knight, need I be more explicit

About my wife, and you, and lust illicit?

[*Madame Sganarelle quickly leaves the window.*

LÉLIE (*thinking, of course, that he means Célie*)

No longer worthy of my love I deem her!

Yours be she, without dread that I'll redeem her!

CÉLIE (*astounded*)

Well, that's a master-stroke, you subtle schemer!

LÉLIE (*to Célie*)

And do *you* think me capable of that?

CÉLIE (*wholly mystified, referring him to Sganarelle*)

Ask *him;* he's got your reputation pat!

SGANARELLE (*hastily*)

No. Leave me out. So just your point of view,

The pleading of my case I'll leave to you!

[*All three have thus arrived at a bewildered impasse, when —*

Madame Sganarelle in great excitement rushes from the house, right.

MADAME SGANARELLE (*to Célie*)

Madame, I do not wish to appear jealous,
But I'm not blind, and you might be less zealous
At snaring hearts already owned by others!

CÉLIE (*as proud and reserved as her girlishness permits, the better to counter Madame Sganarelle's vulgar storm*)

Ingenuous admission! It quite smothers!

SGANARELLE (*between them, blustering at his Wife*)

Who asked for you? Don't pitch upon this lady!
She's standing up for me. It's you that's shady.
You're so afraid to lose this little lover —

CÉLIE (*to Lélie, passionately*)

You see? I told you lies could find no cover!
(*To Madame Sganarelle*)
Pray do not fret. I make no claim to thievings.
(*To Sganarelle*)
She's more than welcome to another's leavings![1]

[*All four now begin to talk at once, ad lib., louder and louder, — Célie turning on Lélie, Madame Sganarelle shrieking at her Husband with rapid hands, and the two men, center, shouting their defense.*

The Maid takes refuge on the doorstep, left, and looks on in open-mouthed wonder till a common want of breath imposes sudden silence.

THE MAID (*as all pant and gesticulate*)

Good Lord, will this wild twaddle never end?
The more I hear the less I comprehend.

[1] This line is Moeller's, not Molière's.

It's time I set *my* wits upon the task!
(*She breaks between Célie and Lélie into their midst just as they are about to recommence*)
Will each of you reply to what I ask?
[*They look at each other, words checked at the tips of their tongues, and then Lélie, the most high-bred and quickest to recover, answers.*

LÉLIE
Why, yes.

CÉLIE
Why, yes.

MADAME SGANARELLE
Why, yes.

SGANARELLE
Why, yes.

THE MAID (*in wringing this answer from each, she has backed up between Lélie and Sganarelle; with finality*)
Confess!
(*To Lélie*)
How has my mistress wronged you, as you guess?

LÉLIE (*drawn up to his full little height, turning on Célie with great dignity*)
She has abandoned me and with another wedded!

THE MAID (*as astonished as Célie herself*)
Wedded? To whom?

LÉLIE (*pointing with a bitter smile at the vacant Sganarelle*)
To him.

CÉLIE (*thunderstruck*)
To him?!

THE MAID
To him! Who said it?

LÉLIE
He did, himself, to-day!

THE MAID (*to Sganarelle*)

Is that true?

SGANARELLE (*in loud self-defense*)

By my life,
I only said that I was married to my wife!

LÉLIE (*to him*)

I saw you deeply troubled at my miniature.

SGANARELLE (*offering it only too eagerly*)

There it is!

LÉLIE (*not taking it*)

And you said you had it from her, sure,
Who was your wife?

SGANARELLE

Without doubt, 'twas from her hands I took it,
And only by that token knew that she was crooked.

MADAME SGANARELLE (*she has suddenly recognized Lélie's identity with the picture, and turns on Sganarelle tartly*)

Impertinent! Repeating still that stupid tale!
I chanced upon that trinket in the street!

SGANARELLE

That's stale!

MADAME SGANARELLE

And when after your unjust ire I found *him*, fainting,
And asked him in, I never perceived *he* was the *painting!*

CÉLIE (*in wonder*)

I dropped that jewel here when in my swoon.
(*To Sganarelle, prettily and meaningly*) *You* know.

SGANARELLE (*looking from one to the other, a great light breaking slowly on him*)

Good Lord! My horns are nothing!
(*Joyously*) Ah, they weighed on me so!

[*He tosses his swords away, capers about, takes off his banging armor, and prolongs the ridiculous pantomime as long as it holds the audience, while the other four watch him astonished.*

THE MAID (*after a while, to them all*)

You must thank me that all these facts have now been sifted.

MADAME SGANARELLE

Perhaps the harm is small, but still *my* doubt's not lifted.

[*She glances from Sganarelle to Célie, and back again.*

SGANARELLE (*expansive in forgiveness*)

Oh, let's enjoy a mutual confidence!
I risk more by it than *you* do (*rubbing his forehead*)!

MADAME SGANARELLE (*not too graciously*)

Well, from hence
So be it; but take good care that *I* find no offense!

THE MAID (*to the audience*)

One drastic dose was all it took, of *common sense.*

[*The play may end here; but since it began with the romantic story, balance were best served by continuing as does the original.*

CÉLIE (*she and Lélie have been frantically whispering together*)

Alas! I let my blinded heart dictate,
And now I fear I've learnt the truth too late.
(*Gorgibus pokes his head, in a comic night-cap, out of the window, left*)
To papa's will to wed me I consented
When I believed you false. (*Tragically*) How now prevent it?

[*Gorgibus pulls in his head sharply, and slams the casement.*

THE MAID (*recognizing the sound*)

Your father's coming, —

LÉLIE (*magnificently*) I'll make him keep his word!

(*Gorgibus hurries from the house, trying to pull off his night-cap and pulling his wig off with it, so that he has to stop, abashed, on the step as Lélie swings on him down-stage, and holding Célie's right hand*)

Aflame with mine old ardor, undeter'd,
Behold me here, Monsieur, return'd with speed
To wed my beauteous Célie as agreed!

GORGIBUS (*tartly, resettling his wig*)

Beholds you here, return'd with speed,
Aflame with ardor, undeter'd,
To wed your Célie as agreed,
Your Lordship's humble servant! — But, I pray you,
There is — a little matter — may delay you.
My duty and her duty both must bind.
Another maid for wife you best had find,
For she herself has changed her marrying mind.

CÉLIE (*winningly*)

Since changing mind's a maid's prerogative,
I change again, and love to Lélie give.[1]

GORGIBUS

You will? Ho, ho! When not a moment past
I bound you by a promise fit and fast
To wed with Valère! You're my daughter still,
And whilst you are, you'll marry as I will!

[*He snatches her left hand and swings her around to his other side.*

[1] The last six lines are Moeller's, not Molière's.

THE MAID (*most opportunely*)

I see Valère's old father this way heading.[1]

GORGIBUS (*letting Célie go, and rubbing his hands greedily*)

To make arrangements, doubtless, for the wedding!
(*Villebrequin comes, hobbling on a stick, from up right*)
Welcome, good Villebrequin! How do you do?

VILLEBREQUIN (*in a cracked voice*)

I'm very well, I thank you. How are you?

GORGIBUS

Quite well, I thank you. And your son? He's well?

VILLEBREQUIN

Yes, very, very. — (*Significantly*) I've some news to tell.

GORGIBUS

Well, speak it out: my daughter waits to hear
Some word from Valère, now the wedding's near.

VILLEBREQUIN (*hesitant*)

For four months past, from home — my son — has tarried.

GORGIBUS (*lightly*)

Traveling, I suppose?

VILLEBREQUIN (*with sudden decision*)

Why, no, sir, — he's been married!
(*All start back, with appropriate expressions*)
So rich his bride — so famed her family —
Of course, I had to bless them and agree!

GORGIBUS (*after the moment's shock, appearing no whit dampened*)

Well now, how pat! for just this very minute
He (*pointing to Lélie*) sought my daughter's hand and hoped to win it.

[1] The last five lines are more Moeller's than Molière's.

Photo by White, N. Y.

SCENE FROM *SGANARELLE* AS PRODUCED BY THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS AT THE COMEDY THEATER, NEW YORK, IN MARCH, 1917

Villebrequin's Revelation, with Gros-René and Sganarelle's Relative also present at the rear

I would have let him have her; but, you see,
My covenants to you prevented me.
(*Smiling at the lovers, first Célie and then Lélie*)
But now I think it over more and more,
I recollect I'd promised her before.

LÉLIE

You did, sir; and our marriage will attest
That honor's way has ever been the best.

GORGIBUS

Well, let's within. Why longer now delay
To consummate the deeds and name the day?

[*As they file into the house, left, politely and without hurry, Sganarelle comes forward:*

SGANARELLE (*to the audience*)

This lesson, please, good people, ere we part,
By my example heed and take to heart:
Appearances most pat may be deceiving
And seeing shouldn't always mean believing.

[*His wife is the last of the entering file, and he takes her hand, bowing as the Curtain falls. Then he pulls the file out in a string across the stage for the Curtain calls. Gros-René pops into it from up left beside the Maid, and the pompous Relative and her page appear down right, and the five couples severally acknowledge the applause.*

THE END

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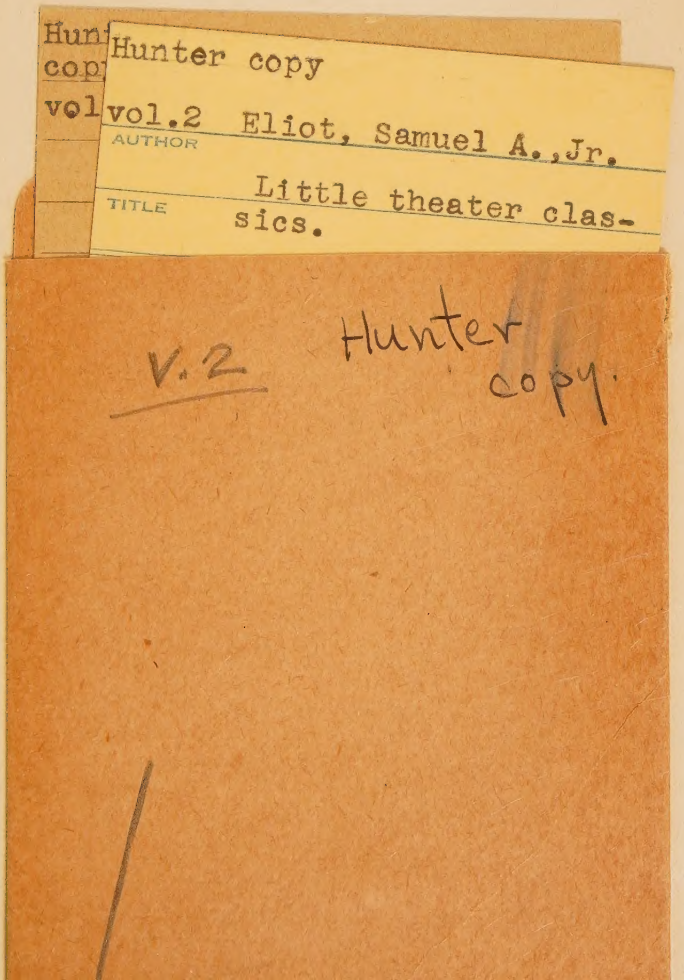

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